Shojo Beat Manga

Sand Chronicles

7

Story & Art by

Hinako Ashihara

Shojo Beat
MANGA FROM THE HEART

THE REAL DRAMA BEGINS IN...

Sand Chronicles

Ann's junior high school reunion is coming up, and she hasn't seen Daigo in two years. How will *their* reunion go? Then, finally, the story behind Ann's engagement. Who is her fiancé...?

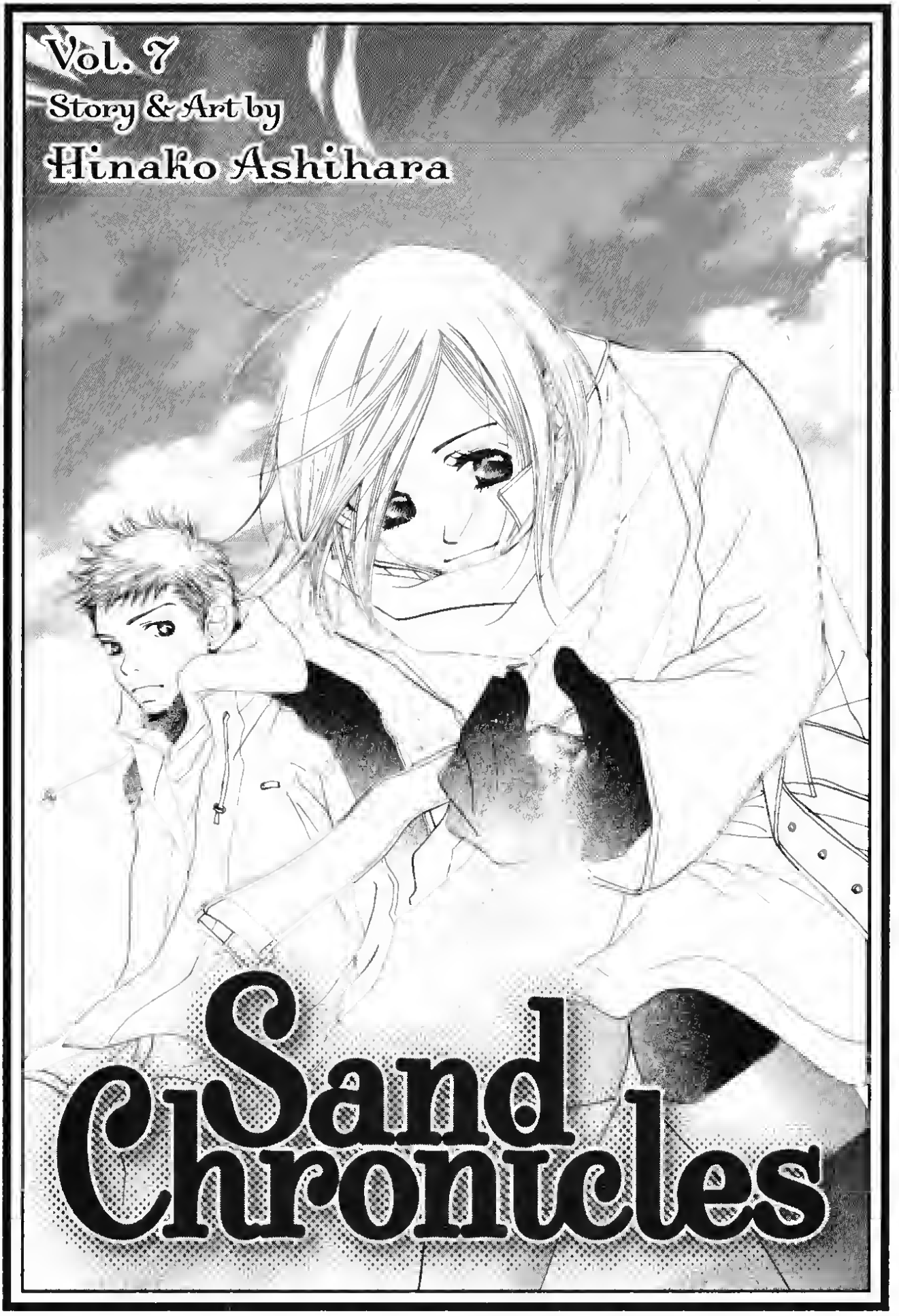
7

Story & Art by

Hinako Ashihara

Can the sands of time bury the pain of the past?

Sand
Chronicles


Vol. 7
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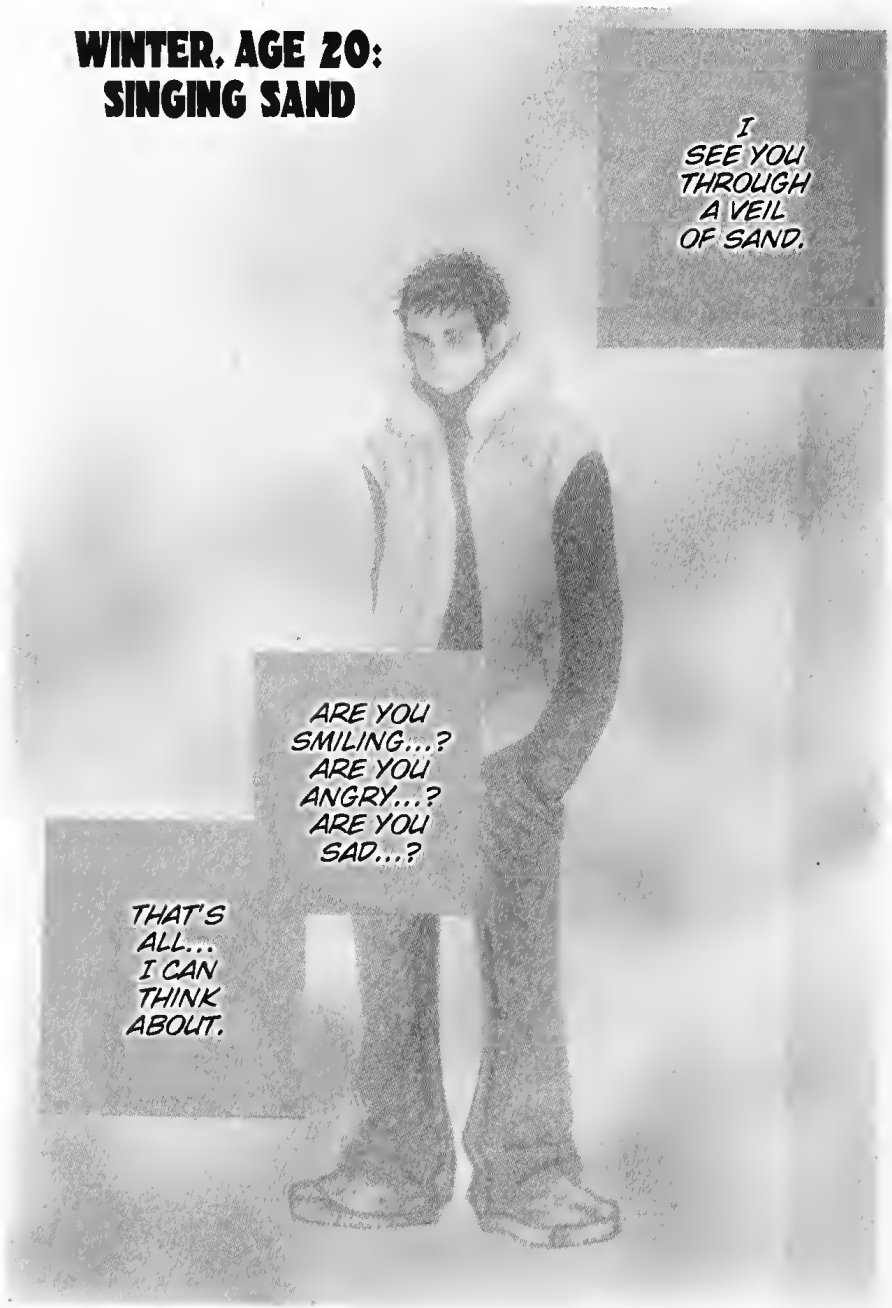
Sand Chronicles

WINTER, AGE 20: SINGING SAND



Sand Chronicles

Volume 7

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Story thus far...

After her parents' divorce, Ann moves to rural Shimane with her mother. When Ann's mother commits suicide, Ann's new friends, Daigo and wealthy siblings Fuji and Shika, are a great support to her. But then Ann moves back to Tokyo to live with her father...

Ann finally commits to dating Fuji. On a study trip by the seaside, they spend the night together. But Ann realizes she is still in love with Daigo. Ann's father's longtime friend Kaede has become pregnant with his child, and Ann encourages them to marry. After thinking long and hard, Ann decides to leave Fuji...and once again finds herself all alone.

Main characters

Shika Tsukishima
Shika tried to manipulate Ann into having a nervous breakdown so she could steal Daigo.

Fuji Tsukishima
It seems like no matter how many times Ann rejects him, Fuji still wants to be with her.

Daigo Kitamura
Daigo's friends encouraged him to date Ayumu, the girl who is tutoring him.

Ann Minase
Uncertain about her future, Ann decides to study Japanese literature at a junior college.

WINTER, AGE 20: SINGING SAND

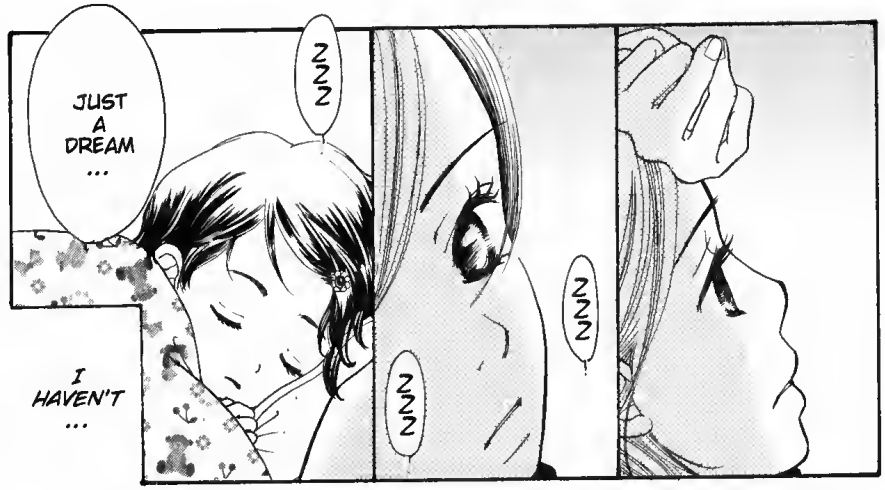
CHI

TR-TR-TR-TRUM

THIS IS THE LITTLE GIRL FROM THE OPENING SCENE OF VOLUME 1. SHE TAKES AFTER KAEDE MORE THAN HER DAD.

← SEVEN YEARS OLD

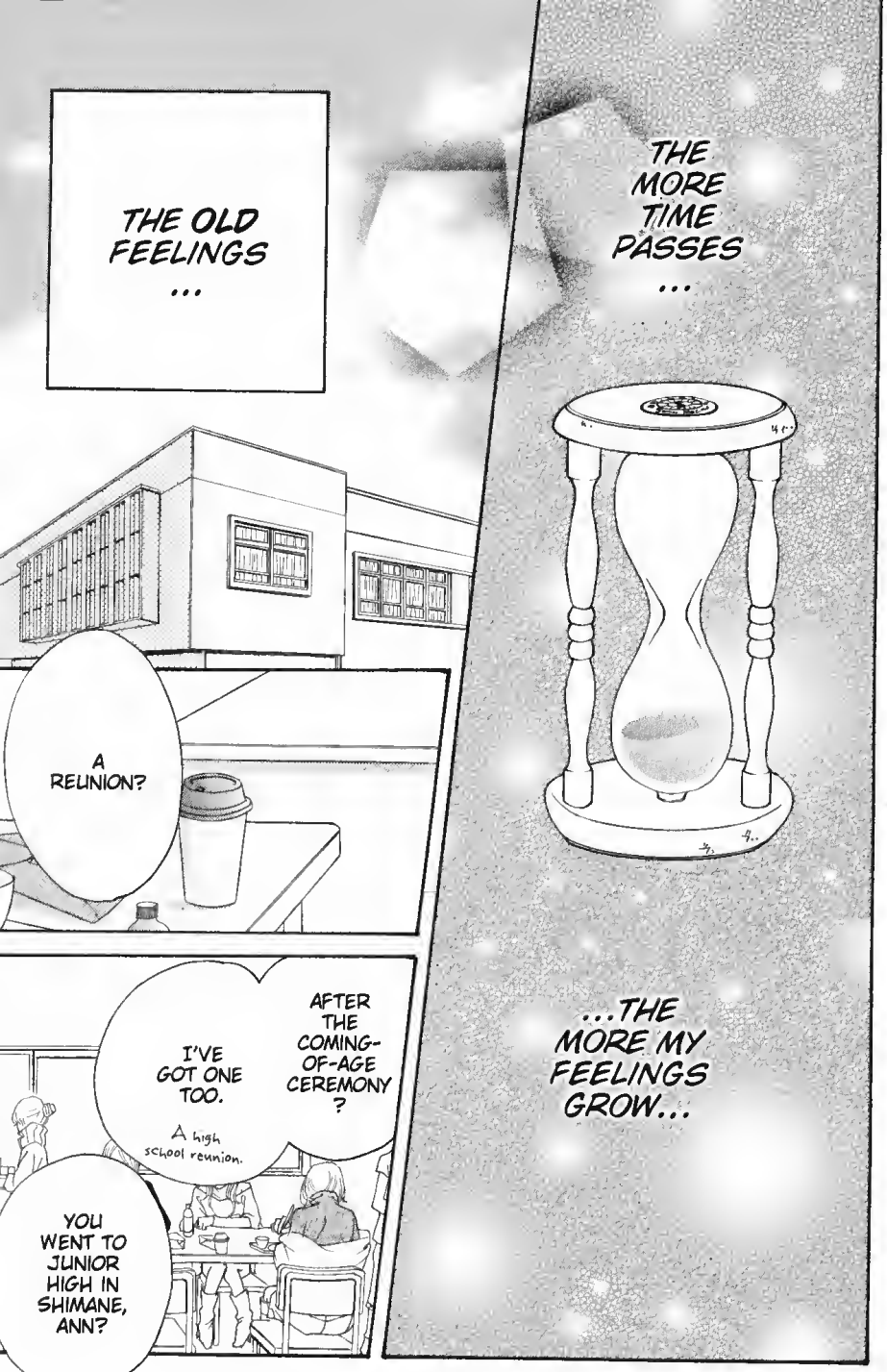
...AND WE ALL MOVED INTO A (USED) HOUSE IN THE TOKYO SUBURBS.
Outta the way!
VRRRRRR
...DAD AND KAEDE GOT MARRIED...
IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GRADUATE FROM JUNIOR COLLEGE ...
Chi, that's dirty!
MY HALF-SISTER IS ONE AND A HALF NOW.
VOOM! VOOM!
FOOOOD!
FOOD?
CHI! THAT ISN'T FOOD!!
NO! NOT FOOD!
CHEW
CHOMP
MUNCH
AAAGH!
...AND MY COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.


JUST A DREAM ...
I HAVEN'T ...
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ

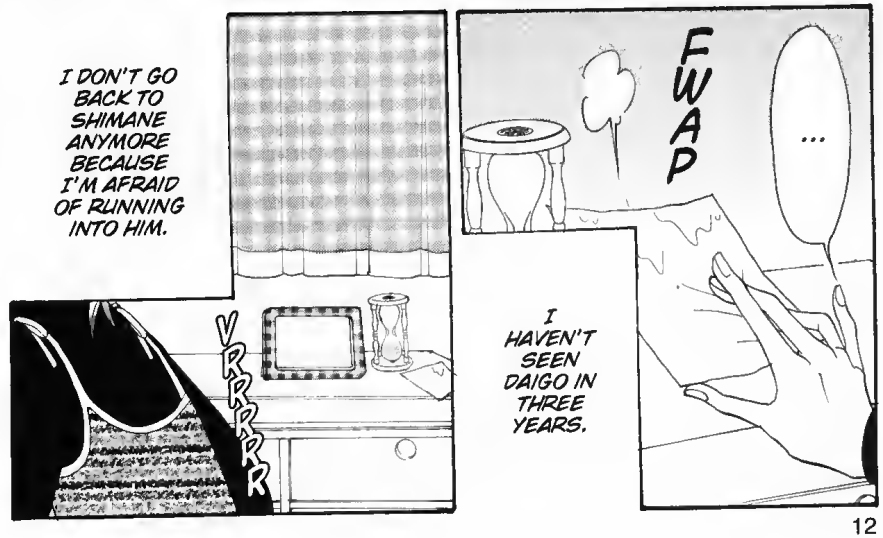
NO PROBLEM. IT'S FINE UNTIL I START MY NEW JOB.
THANKS FOR ALL THE COOKING AND BABY-SITTING.
Bye, cutie!
Mmm-ha!!
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!!
We don't wanna be poor!
WORK HARD SO WE CAN PAY BACK DAD'S LOANS!!

TWO YEARS AGO ...
Say "bye-bye"!
HA HA!
MAMA!
Off I go!

...DREAMT ABOUT DAIGO ...
...FOR A LONG TIME.
OKAY, I'M OFF!

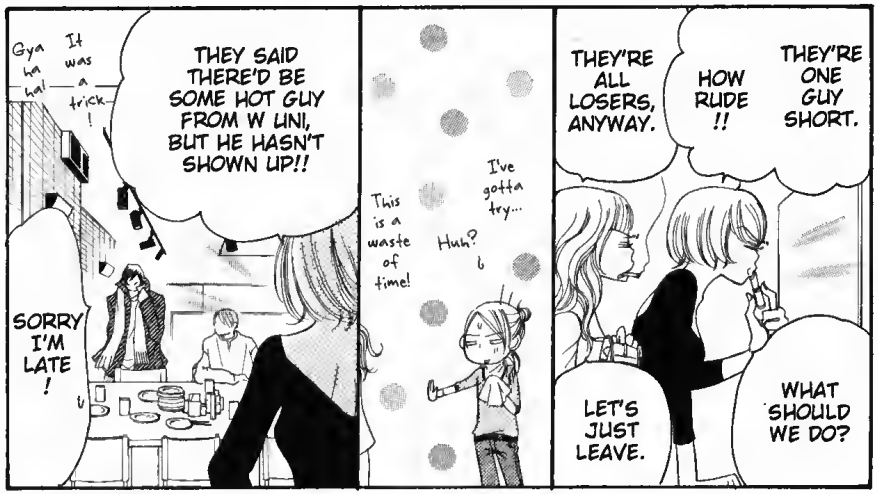

THE OLD FEELINGS ...
A REUNION?
I'VE GOT ONE TOO.
A high school reunion.
AFTER THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY ?
YOU WENT TO JUNIOR HIGH IN SHIMANE, ANN?
THE MORE TIME PASSES ...
...THE MORE MY FEELINGS GROW...

YESTERDAY, I GOT AN INVITATION TO MY CLASS REUNION IN SHIMANE.
You're Invited to Our Class Reunion!
KRUNCH KRUNCH KRUNCH
UGH... IT'S SOAKING WET.
Baby Snacks
GLOB
Be there or suffer the consequences!! --Naka
THAT MUST BE WHY I DREAMED ABOUT DAIGO.


I DON'T GO BACK TO SHIMANE ANYMORE BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF RUNNING INTO HIM.
VRRRRR
FWAP
...
I HAVEN'T SEEN DAIGO IN THREE YEARS.

NAO'S BOYFRIEND FOUND OUT ABOUT IT.
So she backed out.
YOU PUT ME ON THE LIST?!
MY HEART IS DRIED UP.
BUT I'M LONELY.
WHAT ?
YOU ALWAYS SAY THAT!
SINGLES PARTIES AREN'T MY THING...
I lack feminine charm...
RETREAT
SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM ?
YOU'RE SINGLE, AREN'T YOU?
CHATTER CHATTER
KYA HA HA!
FUJI...
...TOLD ME SOMETHING LIKE THAT ONCE.
ARGH ...
IF YOU THROW UP WALLS, YOU'LL NEVER FIND A BOYFRIEND.
See you there!!

What if he says you look pretty?
GAH!
WHAT IF YOU FALL HEAD-OVER-HEELS AGAIN?
YOUR FIRST LOVE IS BOUND TO BE THERE! ♡
YOU MUST BE NERVOUS.
Reunions are weird.
It's around here somewhere...
I can't even find Shimane on the map!
MAMI DIDN'T HAVE A BOYFRIEND UNTIL COLLEGE.
IT DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD TO LOOK BACKWARD.
HEY, GUYS!
Hmm ?
SCOWL
FOOO
I'M MORE OF A FORWARD-LOOKING PERSON ...
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN RELIVING THE PAST!
EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND ROMANCE ...
AH HA HA ...
With the boys from F Uni? I'll pass..
Beggars can't be choosers!
ME!
ME! ME! ME!
WHO'S UP FOR A GOKON PARTY?


Gya ha ha!
It was a trick!
THEY SAID THERE'D BE SOME HOT GUY FROM W UNI, BUT HE HASN'T SHOWN UP!!
SORRY I'M LATE!
This is a waste of time!
Huh?
I've gotta try...
THEY'RE ALL LOSERS, ANYWAY.
HOW RUDE!!
THEY'RE ONE GUY SHORT.
LET'S JUST LEAVE.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

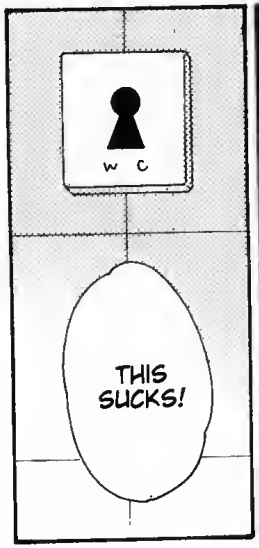
HUH?
Sorry...
You're way late!
We thought you'd never come!
AARGH
AGH!

KLUNK
AM I REALLY THROWING UP WALLS?

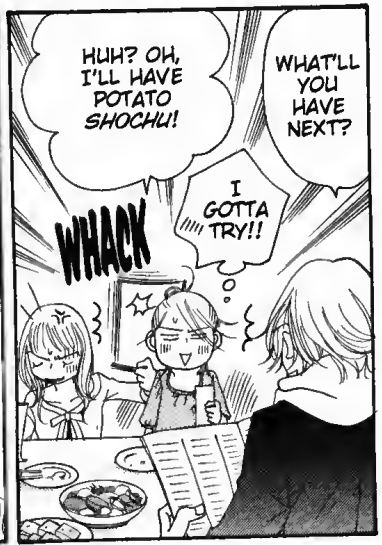
...THAN DAIGO OR I EVER COULD. HE'S OUT THERE.
...THE GUY WHO CAN MAKE YOU HAPPIER ...

ANN, ARE YOU DRINKING?
GRIP
TRY...
I'VE GOTTA TRY!

...
EVERYTHING IS ABOUT DAIGO.
IT'S CALLED FIRST LOVE BECAUSE THERE'S A SECOND AND THIRD TIME, TOO!


W C
THIS SUCKS!

NEVER ORDER PONSHU OR SHOCHU!!
Try harder!
SHOCK

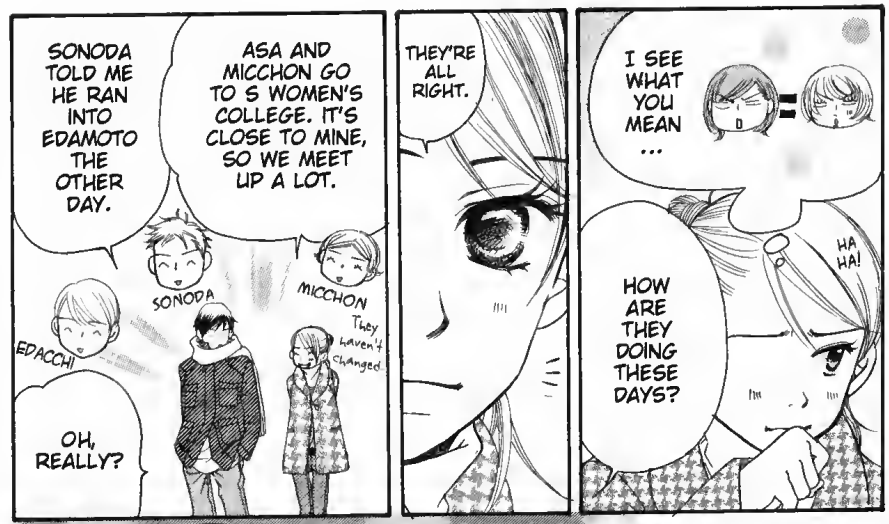

HUH? OH, I'LL HAVE POTATO SHOCHU!
WHAT'LL YOU HAVE NEXT?
I GOTTA TRY!!
WHACK

YOU'RE WORKING?
GRAB
HE TOOK MY SHIFT ONCE, SO I COULDN'T SAY NO.
He said I could just sit here.
YOU HAVE A JOB?
I'M SO JEALOUS!!
SHASH
MY COWORKER FORCED ME TO COME.
YANK
IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE SEATING !!!
...REMINDS ME OF ASADA.
She used to wear me out.
ONLY ASADA WASN'T SO CLINGY.
ASA?
On to the next bar!
Bye-bye!
GYA HA HA!
FUJI'S LEAVING?!
THAT GIRL MAMI ...
HEH HEH...

NOOOOOOOO!!!
What's the matter?
I CAN'T ...
...BELIEVE IT!
I NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE YOU HERE.
ME NEITHER.
IT'S BEEN OVER A YEAR ...
...HASN'T IT?
YEAH.
YOU'RE GOING TO SINGLES PARTIES ?
HEH...
AH HA HA!
HA HA
WHAT'S WITH THOSE TWO?
Really?
GAH! SERIOUSLY?!
AND HE'S HER EX.
THEY'RE OLD FRIENDS.
From Shimane.

OH ...
?
YOU CAN ANSWER IT. I DON'T MIND.
UH ... ... THANKS.
TLING-A-LING
...

BIP
WAS ... ... THAT ...
...
IT WAS ...
...YOUR ... ...GIRL-FRIEND?
Sounded like it...
...
BIP
HELLO ?
HUH?
It's cold ...
YOU'RE AT MY APART-MENT?
BUT I TOLD YOU TODAY I WAS ...
YOU KNOW WHERE THE KEY IS, RIGHT?
YEAH. I'LL BE HOME SOON.
UM ...
OKAY, WAIT THERE.


SONODA TOLD ME HE RAN INTO EDAMOTO THE OTHER DAY.
ASA AND MICCHON GO TO S WOMEN'S COLLEGE. IT'S CLOSE TO MINE, SO WE MEET UP A LOT.
SONODA
MICCHON
They haven't changed
EDACCHI
OH, REALLY?
THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN ...
HA HA!
HOW ARE THEY DOING THESE DAYS?

...I ASKED THEM NOT TO.
HUH?
I... ...WASN'T READY TO FACE YOU YET.
THAT'S BECAUSE ...
IT'S BEEN SO LONG... ...SINCE WE ALL GOT TO-GETHER.
WHEN YOU PASSED YOUR ENTRANCE EXAMS ...
...WE TALKED ABOUT THROWING A PARTY, BUT IT NEVER HAPPENED.

...
HMM ...
Actually, they might be good together.
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU.
WHAT A SURPRISE!

MARIKO MOGAMI (22)
FUJI'S COUSIN
WHAAAAAAAAT?!!
MY FAMILY'S AGAINST IT.
THEY SAY IT ISN'T RESPECTABLE.
I...
...WANTED TO MAKE THINGS CLEAR ...
...SO I MOVED OUT AND GOT MY OWN PLACE.
SHOCK
...
WELL ...
...I GUESS IT ISN'T ILLEGAL, BUT...
MY FAMILY SENDS MONEY EACH MONTH ...
...BUT I WANT TO AT LEAST COVER MY OWN RENT ...
...SO I GOT A JOB ...

...MARIKO.
WE'RE DATING NOW.
WHAT?!

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
IT MIGHT ...
...SOUND WEIRD COMING FROM ME...
...BUT ...
...I REALLY AM HAPPY FOR YOU.
HOW ABOUT YOU, ANN?
OH, THAT ...
I'M NOT SURE.
HAVE YOU GOTTEN OVER DAIGO?
ME?
IT WASN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW.

TIME ...
...KEEPS MOVING FORWARD ...

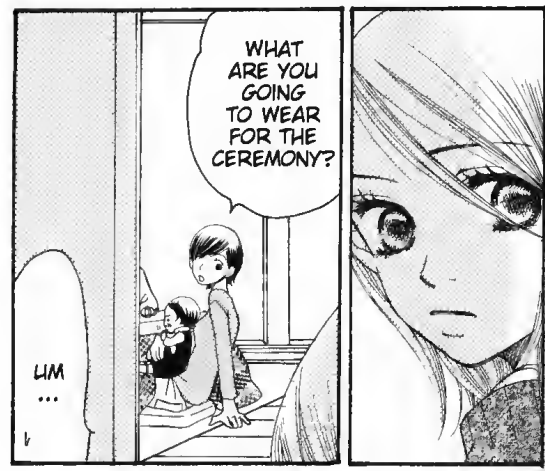
YOU GOT THE INVITATION ...
...TO THE REUNION, RIGHT?
I'm not gonna go, though...
GO AND ...
...TALK TO HIM.
FIND OUT...
...WHAT HE MEANS TO YOU.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ...
...I WOULD SAY.
JUST BE HONEST WITH HIM.
HONK HONK
BUT WHAT IF HE'S STILL WITH AYUMU?
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I CAN'T.
THAT'LL BE A START.

BUT...
...AT LEAST IT WAS A CLEAN BREAK.
I SWORE I'D NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN.
...I HAD A ROUGH TIME.
FOR A LONG TIME AFTER WE BROKE UP...
SO...
I HAD TO MOVE ON.
I KNEW I COULD NEVER GET YOU BACK.
WHY DON'T YOU GO TALK TO HIM?
YOU REALLY SHOULD.
YOU STILL ...
...HAVE FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER...
...AND I THINK ...
...THAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK.
BUT YOU AND DAIGO...

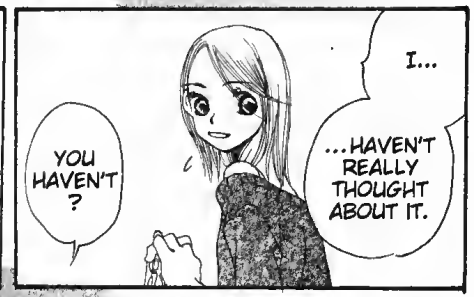
WE CAN NEVER GO BACK IN TIME ...
...BUT I WISH ...
...I COULD SEE YOU REALLY SMILE AGAIN.
HONK HONK

RIGHT HERE AND NOW ...
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM OR NOT?
WHICH IS IT?
NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTS.
DON'T COMPLICATE THINGS.
...BUT ...
...I LIKED IT EVEN BETTER WHEN YOU SMILED.
AND I LIKED THE WAY YOU'D GIVE ME A LITTLE SHOVE WHEN I WAS BEING STUBBORN.
I USED TO THINK IT WAS CUTE WHEN YOU GOT THAT TROUBLED LOOK...

TOTTORI STATION
WHICH IS IT?
SLIP
Agh!
WHOOPS!
DOWN SHE GOES...


WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO WEAR FOR THE CEREMONY?
UM...
ANN!

I just wore a dress to mine...
Hmm...
She should wear a furisode


YOU HAVEN'T?
I...
...HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

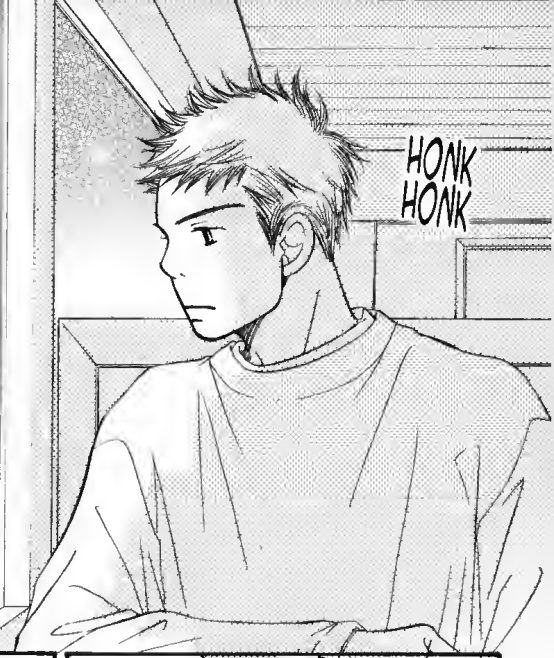
KSS
SH
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM OR NOT?
HERE AND NOW...

Oh to be 20 again!

IT WAS DESTINED ...
YOU WERE VULNERABLE ...
...NOT TO LAST.
...AND I TOOK HER PLACE.
SORRY I NEVER DID BEFORE.
I DITCHED YOU, REMEMBER?!

WE'RE 20...
...AND COMING OF AGE ...
IT WAS AWK-WARD ...
...AND WE WERE BOTH UNHAPPY.
WE COULDN'T GO ON LIKE THAT.
...SO IT'S TIME FOR A FRESH START.

NOW THAT'S DETERMI-NATION!
WEARING A KIMONO IN ALL THIS SNOW...
Oops! There goes another one...
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO GO?


HONK HONK

NOT REALLY.
DO YOU WANT TO?
COME ON, I BET YOU DO!
Don't lie to me!

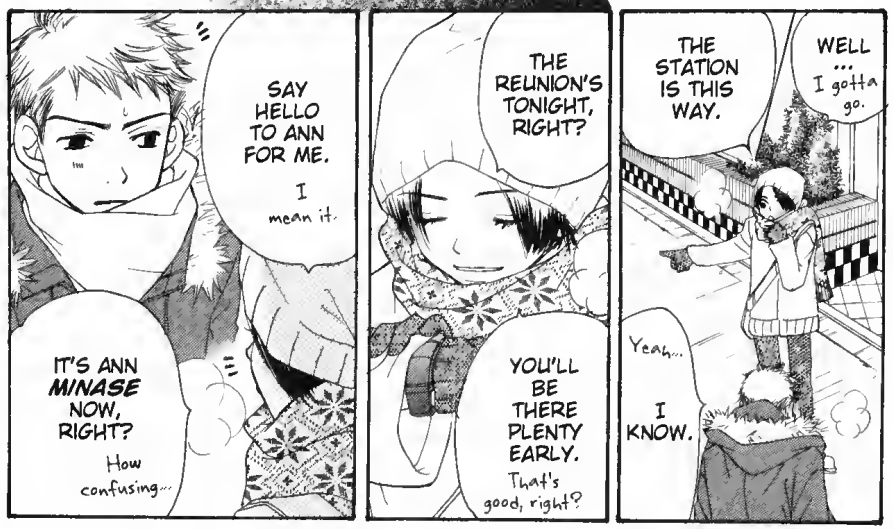
...GOING ALL THE WAY HOME.
YEAH.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
IT'S NOT WORTH ...

WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
FOR ONCE ...
...I WANTED TO SHOW THAT I CARE.

CHAK
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...
...COME ALL THE WAY TO TOTTORI TO SEE ME.

SHE WON'T COME.
SHE DOESN'T EVEN SHOW UP FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF HER MOTHER'S DEATH.
YOU KNOW WHAT ...?
WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT HER...
...YOU LOOK...
...SO ANXIOUS.
HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF!

THANKS, DAIGO.
FOR BEING SOMEONE SPECIAL IN MY LIFE.

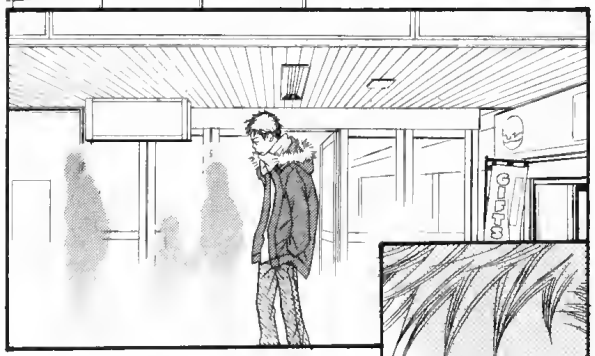

SAY HELLO TO ANN FOR ME. I mean it.
IT'S ANN MINASE NOW, RIGHT? How confusing...
THE REUNION'S TONIGHT, RIGHT?
YOU'LL BE THERE PLENTY EARLY. That's good, right?
THE STATION IS THIS WAY.
WELL ... I gotta go.
Yeah... I KNOW.

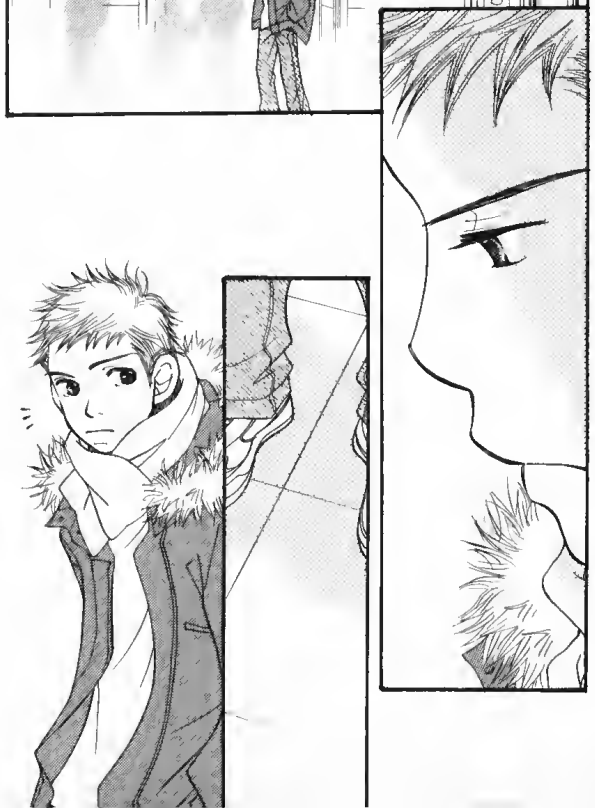
Winter, Age 20:
Singing Sand

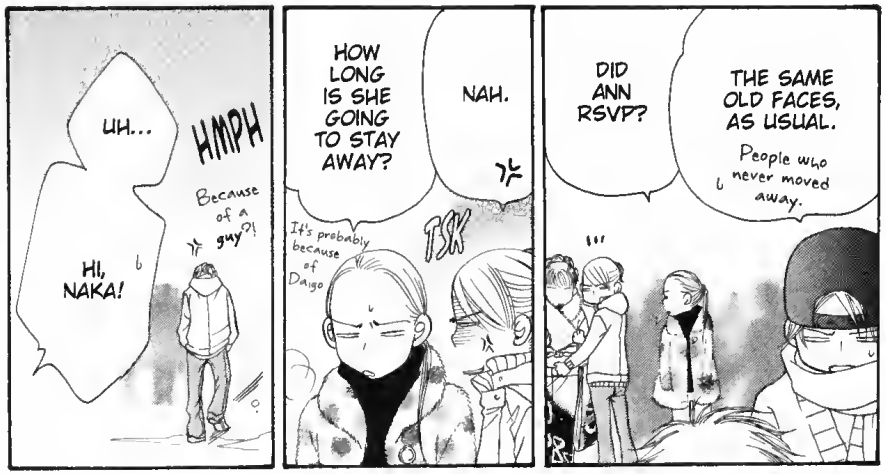
Welcome to Volume 7! And, as always, thanks for reading! Ann and the rest have grown up... Now they're 20 years old. Sometimes I wonder if the younger readers of ***Betsucomi*** are keeping up.

About the crying sand or... to be more precise, ***singing*** sand. You can really hear a cute, squeaky sound when you walk on it. When I went to the beach on a research trip, a local man told me that it was squeaking particularly well that day. Lucky me! ♪

As for the Tottori Sand Dunes...there was lots of snow in the Sanin area when I went. The dunes were like ski slopes... I felt so lost out there in the falling snow and dunes. In its own way, that was fun. I like having a research trip as an excuse to travel by train.



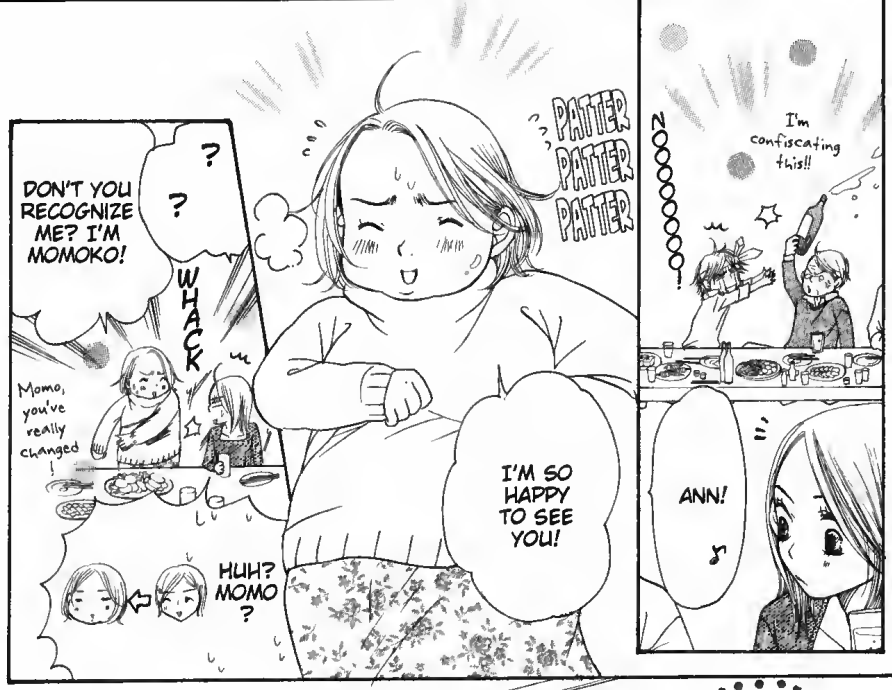


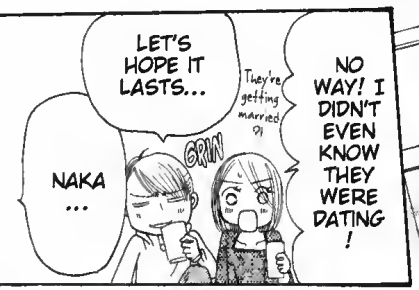

UH...
HMPH
Because of a guy?!
HI, NAKA!
HOW LONG IS SHE GOING TO STAY AWAY?
NAH.
It's probably because of Daigo
TSK
DID ANN RSVP?
THE SAME OLD FACES, AS USUAL.
People who never moved away.

ANN!!
IS IT REALLY YOU?!!
BEE
POE
BOW
You should've told me you were coming!
Yikes!
IS EVERYONE HERE?
BA-DUMP
WHERE'S DAIGO?
Hello!
I...
...SNUCK AWAY FROM MY CEREMONY IN TOKYO AND CAUGHT A PLANE...

You're Invited to Our Class Reunion!
NAKA-HARA!
SUZUKI!!
YOU TWO SEE EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME!
HUG
IT'S BEEN SO LONG !!!
DRAMA QUEENS

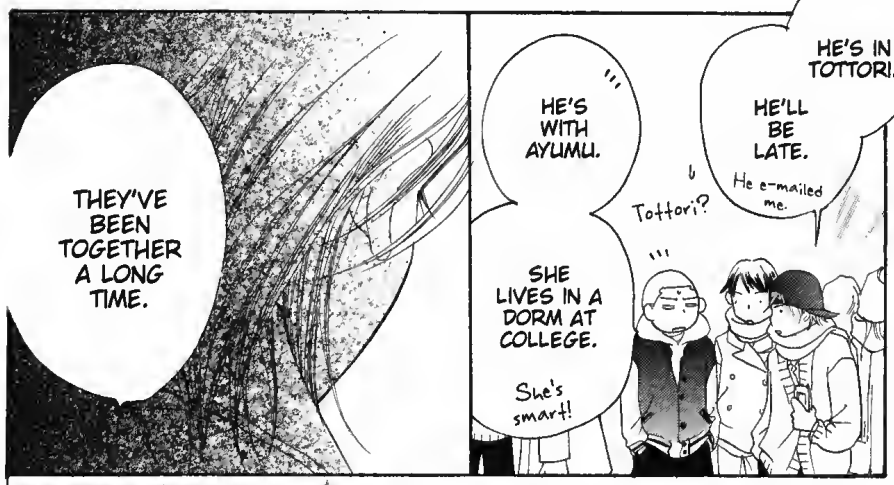
Tottori Sand Dunes


PATTER PATTER PATTER
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? I'M MOMOKO!
?
?
WHACK
Momo, you've really changed!
I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!
HUH? MOMO?
I'm confiscating this!!
ZOOOOOOO!
ANN!


LET'S HOPE IT LASTS...
They're getting married?!
GRIN
NAKA ...
NO WAY! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY WERE DATING!

IT'S NOT AN AFFAIR!!
Affair?
...TELL HER ABOUT YOUR AFFAIR WITH YOUR BOSS. Heh heh...
WHAT?!
He's 24? Not 40?
NAKA LOOKS LIKE HIS DAUGHTER.
HE LOOKS OLD, BUT...
He's only 24.

WHOA
ATTEN-TION!
TEE-HEE!
GAH!
SERIOUSLY?!
THIS SPRING, THOSE TWO ARE TYING THE KNOT!!

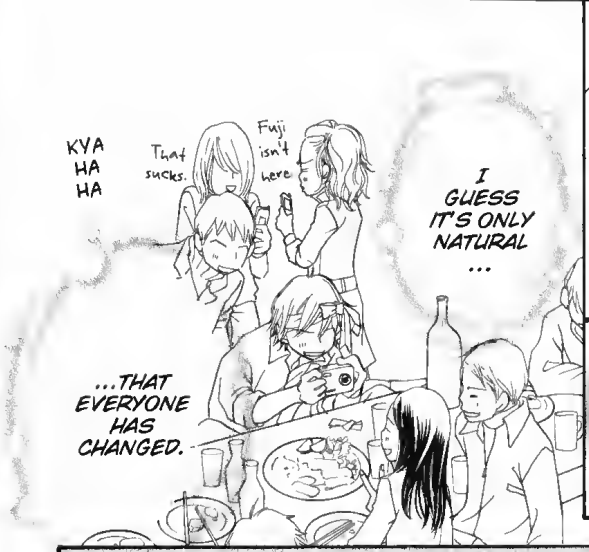

THEY'VE BEEN TOGETHER A LONG TIME.
HE'S WITH AYUMU.
SHE LIVES IN A DORM AT COLLEGE.
She's smart!
Tottori?
HE'S IN TOTTORI.
HE'LL BE LATE.
He e-mailed me.

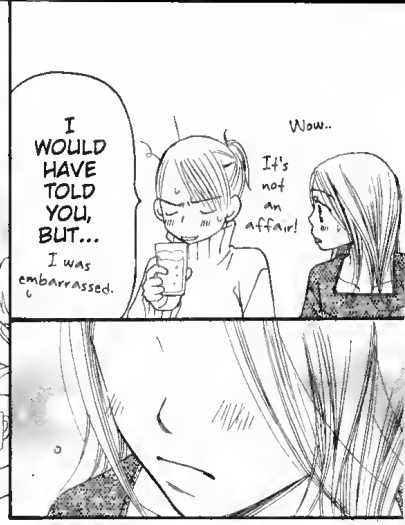
KANPAI!!
SO THIS IS WHAT IT TASTES LIKE!
AT LAST!
WOO-HOO
I KNOW YOU KIDS HAVE HAD ALCOHOL BEFORE!
So don't play dumb!
HICCUP
WE'RE FINALLY OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK!
Onigoroshi Sake? Never heard of it.
HERE, TEACH'— LET ME FILL YOU UP.
GLUP GLUP GLUP
FORMER TEACHER
OKI, YOU'RE STILL 19!
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!
GYA HA HA

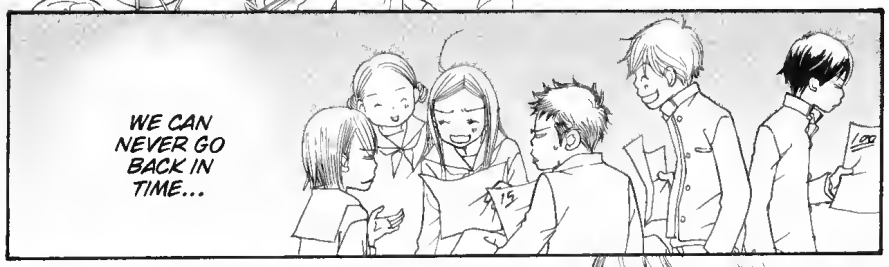
MIDDLE SCHOOL REUNION

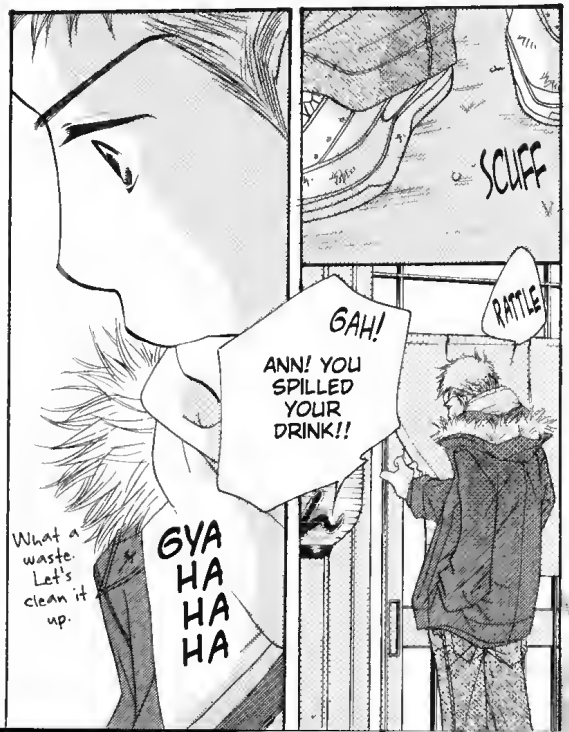
YOU'RE LATE!
LOOK, IT'S DAIGO.
Someone, get a towel!
GYAAAH!
RATTLE

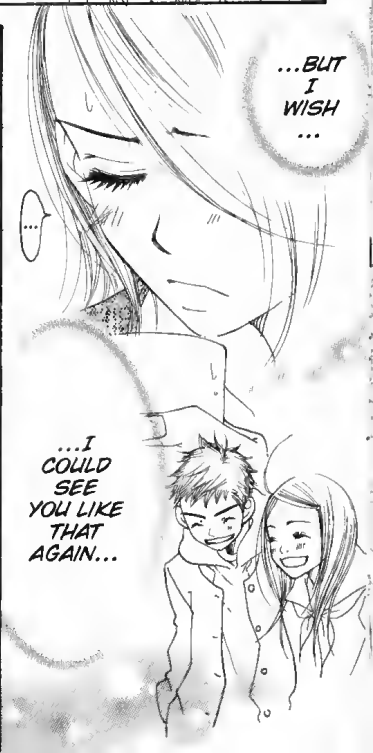
Where have you been?
DUMP
HEY, WATCH IT!
YOUR SHOES ARE FULL OF SAND!
You're filthy!
Wow, what a mess!


KYA HA HA
That sucks.
Fuji isn't here.
I GUESS IT'S ONLY NATURAL ...
...THAT EVERYONE HAS CHANGED.


I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, BUT...
I was embarrassed.
Wow..
It's not an affair!


WE CAN NEVER GO BACK IN TIME...


SCUFF
RATTLE
GAH!
ANN! YOU SPILLED YOUR DRINK!!
What a waste. Let's clean it up.
GYA HA HA HA


...BUT I WISH ...
...I COULD SEE YOU LIKE THAT AGAIN...

I NEED A PLATE.
Hand me one.
Here you go.
Let's get you started.
Thanks again.
FROZEN
...SAY SOMETHING.
WHAT'S IN THIS?
BLINK
PLEASE ...

BLUSH
AH-OH ...
B-DMP
HE'S HERE ...
FLUMP
LET'S END THIS.
B-DMP
...SINCE THAT SUMMER.
I CAN'T ...
...LOOK HIM IN THE EYE.
B-DMP
B-DMP
IT'S BEEN OVER THREE AND A HALF YEARS...

YOU HAVEN'T ...
...CHANGED EITHER!
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT...
SPIN SPIN SPIN SPIN
RRRRIP
RIP
RIP
THE ROOM IS SPINNING!
OH, WOW... WHAT A GROUP!
SLUMP
GROSS! PUT SOME CLOTHES ON!
I'm eating!
Men are idiots!
GYA HA HA HA
OKAY, EVERYONE... TIME FOR THE CLOSING CEREMONY!
It's cold!
Gya ha ha ha!
WOO-HOO!

IT'S ...
...CRAB MEAT.
I think... The round ones, anyway...
OH! I like crab.
UGH! IT'S ARTIFICIAL CRAB!
It's fake!
OF COURSE IT IS...
IN THIS KOROKKE. WHAT'S IN IT?
HUH?
OH, THE KOROKKE ...
TASTES HORRIBLE ...
MUNCH MUNCH
YOU CUT YOUR HAIR.
HUH?
OH, YEAH ... I DID.
A LITTLE.
HEH
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL, ANN.
YOU LOOK EVEN MORE LIKE A KID THAN EVER.
DAIGO ...
GAH!

MEET ME...
...AT TEN TOMORROW, IN FRONT OF THE STATION.
TWEET
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
TOSS
TURN
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
HUH?
DRAG DRAG
GYA HA HA!
WHAT?
Welcome home, Ann.
You reek of spirits!

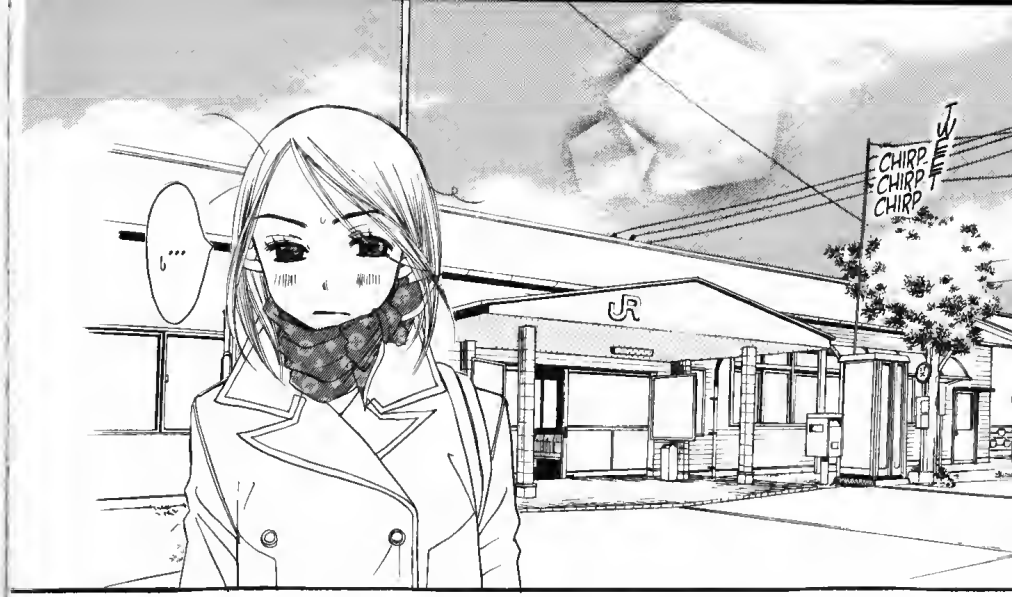
LATER, GUYS!
Party's over?
GYA HA HA!
BOW
Let's do it again some-time!
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
YEAH!
WOO-HOO!

ARE YOU FLYING BACK TO TOKYO TOMORROW?
Come back soon!
I'LL PASS. GRANDMA GETS UPSET IF I COME HOME LATE.
UH...
WE'RE GOING TO OKI'S HOUSE FOR THE AFTER-PARTY...
WANNA COME, ANN?

SACCHAN WILL GIVE US A LIFT.
Let's go!
HUH? Wait!
YANK
ANN...
I COULDN'T SAY A THING...
GYA HA HA!
ANN!

FIND OUT WHAT HE MEANS TO YOU.
GLANCE
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
Sacchan drove?

I'M ASKING BECAUSE ...
...THERE'S ALWAYS A REASON BEHIND EVERYTHING YOU DO.
KLAK
BUT I CAN'T READ YOU ANYMORE.
RUSTLE
KLIK KLAK
WHY?
YOU DID?
THE TWO OF US...
KLAK
IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME.
AYUMU AND I BROKE UP YESTERDAY.
I HEARD THAT ...
NAKA TOLD ME.
...YOU AND FUJI DIDN'T LAST LONG.


...
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
TWEET
JR

...
I'LL SEE YOU TO THE AIRPORT.
OH, UH ...
...I'M FINE NOW.
HERE.
Have a cold drink.
How late were you out last night?
BLEAGH!
GOT A HANG-OVER?

WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
SHHH
IZUMO SOBA
GRRR
THIS PLACE!!
GRRR
This is good.
Told you.
SHHH
IN THE FALL OF OUR THIRD YEAR OF JUNIOR HIGH.
YEAH.
THAT WAS THE DAY...
...I DECIDED TO MOVE IN WITH DAD IN TOKYO.
I BEGGED YOU TO TAKE ME TO IZUMO SHRINE.
BA-BOOM
BA-BOOM
...AND VISITED THE MIRROR POND FOR ANOTHER LOVE FORTUNE AT YAEGAKI SHRINE.
WE DID SHIME-NAWA LOVE FORTUNE-TELLING ...
AH HA HA
AND AFTER THAT WE TOOK A WALK HERE.
THAT WAS A TOUGH DAY FOR ME.
Nothing but fortunes..
KLANG KLANG KLANG

WE HAVEN'T CHANGED.
NOT AT ALL ...
...IN THREE YEARS.
LIKE I SAID ...
KLAK
...I ...
...CAN'T READ YOU.
WANT TO GRAB A BITE?
Some Izumo Soba?
GRRROWL
BUS TO AIRPORT
I KNOW.
My flight isn't until tonight.
...IF WE GO NOW WE'LL BE WAY TOO EARLY.
BUS TO AIRPORT
WELL ...

NIMA?
UH...
THE SAND MUSEUM?
KLAK
NO...
...NOT THERE.

THE STOP AFTER THAT.
MAJI STATION.
KLAK
OH...
KOTOGAHAMA BEACH.
...WHERE THE "SINGING SAND" IS!

IF...
...I HAD STAYED IN SHIMANE...

...I WONDER IF...
...WE WOULD HAVE BROKEN UP ANYWAY.
...NEAR DAIGO...
JR 出雲市駅
IZUMOSHI STATION

NEXT STOP, NIMA ...
KLAK

...A PLACE ...
...I WANNA GO.

WE'VE GOT MORE TIME TO KILL.
YEAH. THERE'S ...

YAAAY!
REALLY?
That's kind of morbid.
SQUEAK
QUARTZ?
What's that?
Geology freak
IF THE BEACH OR WATER IS POLLUTED AT ALL, IT WON'T SQUEAK.
The weather's a factor too...
THE SAND HAS TO BE PERFECTLY POLISHED QUARTZ.
YEAH...
...AND SAND THAT STOPS SQUEAKING IS CALLED "KILLED SAND."
IT WON'T SING IF IT'S DIRTY?
IT'S A NATURAL POLLUTION BAROMETER!

SQUEAK
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME HERE, ANN?
I haven't been here in a while
SQUEAK
BUT I LIKE THE WAY IT FEELS.
YEP!
SQUEAK
OH! THE SAND REALLY DOES SQUEAK! LISTEN! IT SQUEAKS!
Cool!
OF COURSE THEY ARE.
Keep your shoes on!
MY FEET ARE COLD!!
Brrr!
SOME OF THE ONES UP NORTH DO.
They've got the same sand...
CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE JUST RIGHT FOR SAND TO SQUEAK.
I learned about it at school.
SQUEAK
OTHER BEACHES DON'T SQUEAK, DO THEY?
SQUEAK
I'VE BEEN A COUPLE TIMES.
On school trips.
SQUEAK
WEIRD. I WONDER WHY IT SQUEAKS.
SQUEAK

WOULD YOU MIND...
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
...IF I... TELL YOU HOW I FEEL NOW?
MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT...

THE WINTER I WAS 12...

...BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE TIME.
I WANTED TO COME HERE TOO ....
...MOM TOOK ME TO THE SAND MUSEUM.

"I WILL..."
...EVERY-THING STARTED.
THAT WINTER... THAT'S WHEN...

DON'T BE SO QUICK TO SAY YOU'LL FALL WITH ME.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED ...
...I SHOULD HAVE NEVER LET YOU GO.

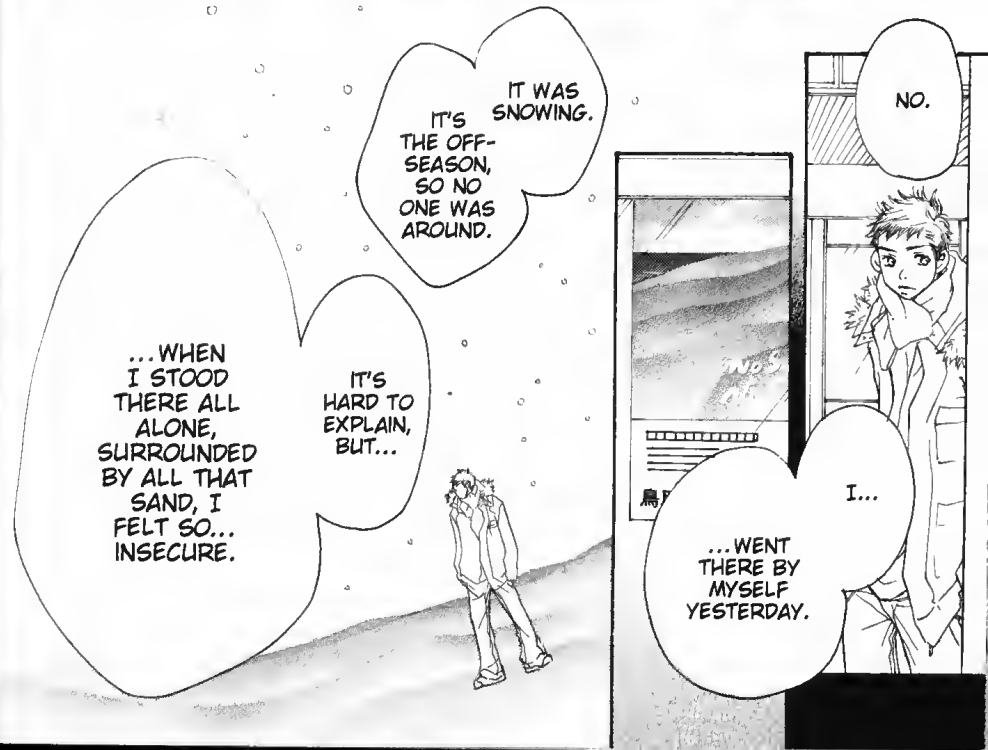
GOING OFF TO TOKYO ....
...AND FIGHTING WITH YOU THAT DAY...
...AND...
...LETTING GO OF YOUR HAND.
...BUT...
I REGRET THE CHOICES I MADE.

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN GOOD FOR US TO GO DOWN TOGETHER.
...DON'T REGRET ANYTHING.
I THINK WE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.
WE...
...DIDN'T MAKE ANY MISTAKES.

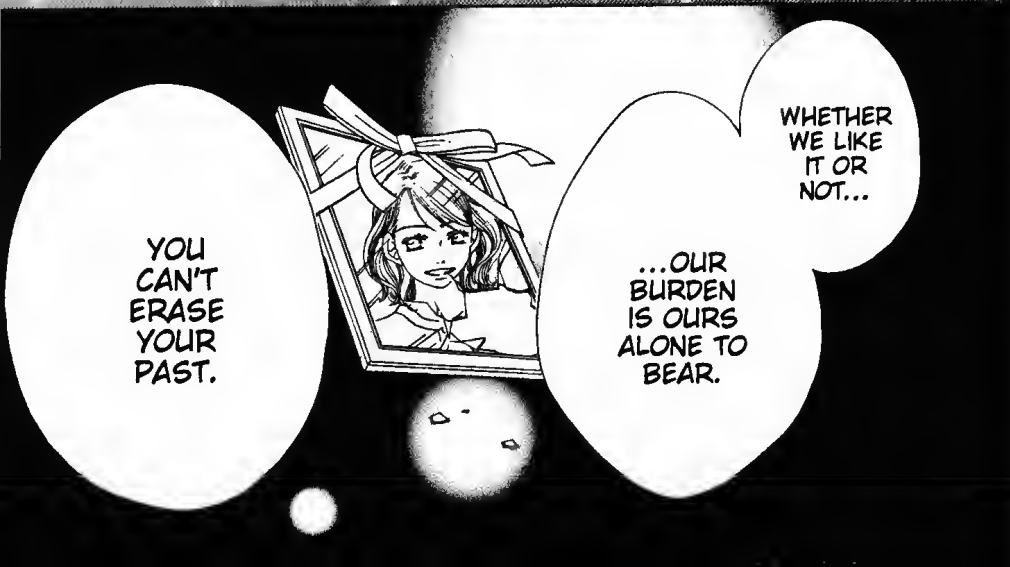
I...

THERE WASN'T A THING IN SIGHT...
I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS...
...AND THE GROUND UNDERFOOT WAS UNSTABLE.

ANN ...
KSSSHH
HUH?
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE TOTTORI SAND DUNES?


IT WAS SNOWING.
IT'S THE OFF-SEASON, SO NO ONE WAS AROUND.
...WHEN I STOOD THERE ALL ALONE, SURROUNDED BY ALL THAT SAND, I FELT SO... INSECURE.
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT...
NO.
I...
...WENT THERE BY MYSELF YESTERDAY.

...
I WANTED TO BEAR HALF YOUR BURDEN ...
...BUT...
...YOU WOULDN'T LET ME.
WHEN I SAW YOU SUFFER...
...BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T LET IT GO.
I KNOW IT WASN'T YOUR CHOICE ...


YOU CAN'T ERASE YOUR PAST.
WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT...
...OUR BURDEN IS OURS ALONE TO BEAR.

THERE WAS NOTHING TO GUIDE ME AND NO CLEAR DESTINATION.
I COULDN'T FIND MY WAY. I WAS LOST.
I GOT CONFUSED. I STARTED TO PANIC.
THERE WAS NO REASON FOR ME TO BE SO NERVOUS.
BUT I WAS PARALYZED.

I THINK ...
...EVERYONE FEELS THAT WAY SOMETIMES.
AND THEN I THOUGHT ...
...MAYBE THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL ALL THE TIME...
...EVER SINCE THE WINTER WE WERE 12.

THE ONE WHO CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY...
...ISN'T ME OR FUJI.
IT'S YOU.
YOU DON'T NEED THAT.
YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.
I'M THROUGH MAKING PROMISES I CAN'T KEEP.

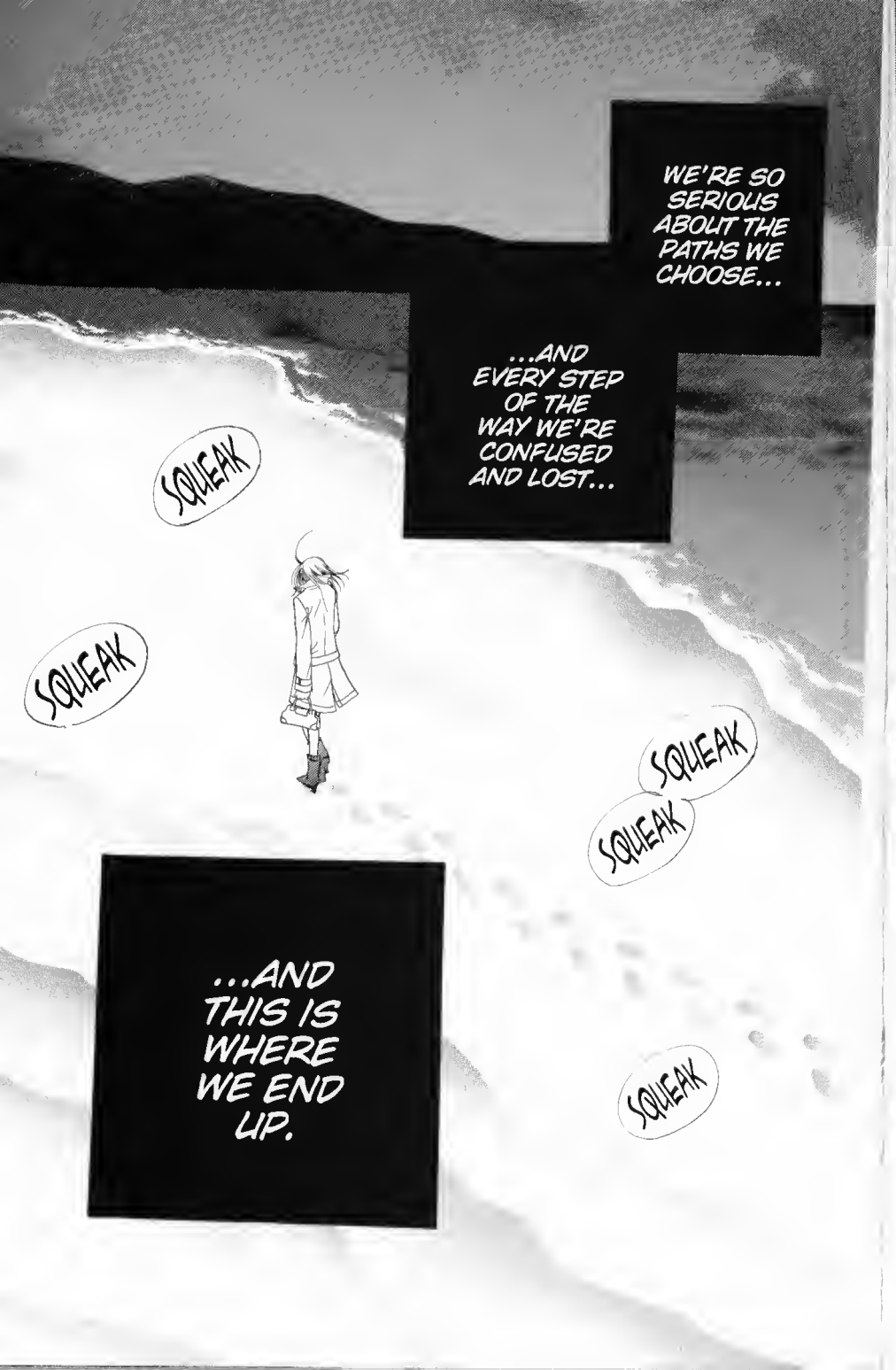
...AND NEVER GIVE UP.
...YOU WANTED TO TELL ME...
...SINCE WE MET LAST NIGHT?
KEEP TRYING
...
...
YOU'RE TELLING ME...
...TO GO ON ALONE.
IS THAT ALL...
YOU'RE REJECTING ME? MY LAST HOPE...

THE SAND BLOWS INTO THE AIR...
...AND I SEE HIM...
... THROUGH A VEIL OF SAND.
HE ISN'T SMILING. OR ANGRY. OR SAD.
THE PERSON I FELL IN LOVE WITH ISN'T WEAK!
FWOOOOSH

HE LOOKS STRAIGHT AT ME...
...WITH HONEST EYES...
...THAT I'VE NEVER KNOWN TO BE CLOUDED.
HIS GAZE...
...IS FIRM AND DIRECT.
YOU...
YES.
TO THE AIRPORT?
...CAN GO ON BY YOURSELF, RIGHT?
BRUSH

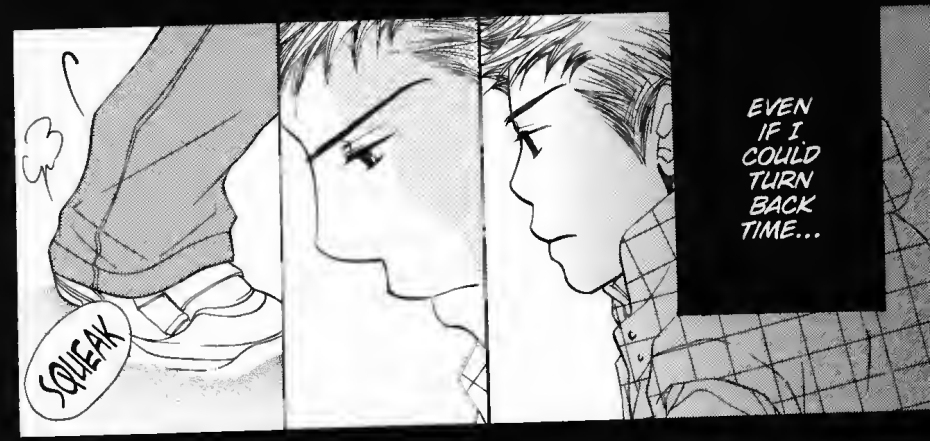
BE HAPPY.
PROMISE ME!
SQUEAK
ANN...
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
WE DIDN'T ...

...AND GOTTEN MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...
...AFTER WE'VE BOTH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH.
SOME-DAY...
YEAH.
GOOD-BYE.
THANKS.


WE'RE SO SERIOUS ABOUT THE PATHS WE CHOOSE...
...AND EVERY STEP OF THE WAY WE'RE CONFUSED AND LOST...
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
...AND THIS IS WHERE WE END UP.

...MAKE ANY MISTAKES.
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
SQUEAK

"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
SQUEAK
BUT THIS TIME... I'M NOT GOING TO CRY.

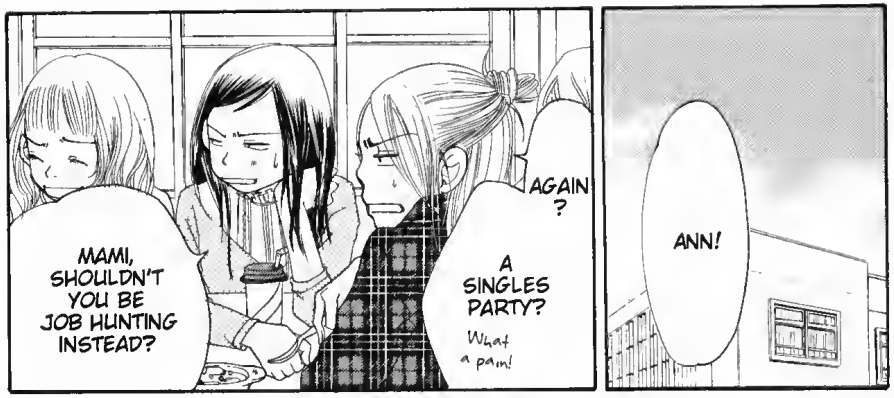

SQUEAK
EVEN IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME...

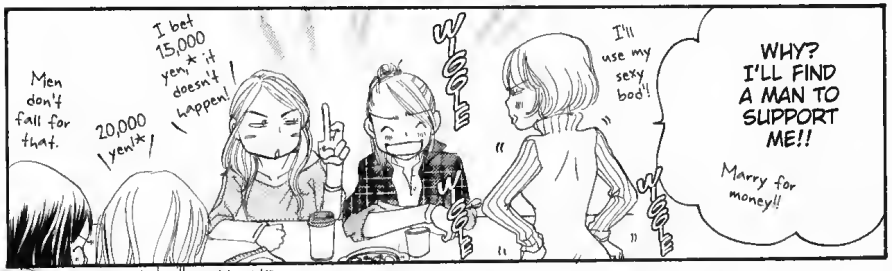
SQUEAK
...AND DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN...
SQUEAK

"I WILL ..."
...I'D FIND MYSELF RIGHT HERE AGAIN.

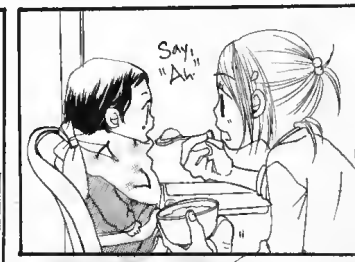
LET GO!
NO, CHI. THAT'S NOT FOOD!
FOOD?
FOOOOOD!!
MUNCH
MUNCH
AW, NOT AGAIN!
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP
KIDS CRACKERS
EWW. IT'S DRENCHED!

CLICK
NO MATTER HOW HARD I FIGHT IT ...
...MY MEMORIES OF DAIGO ONLY MAKE ME WEAKER.

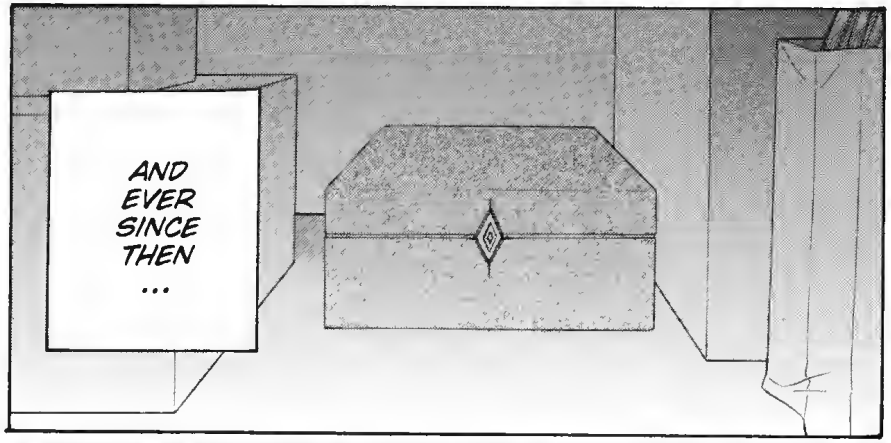

MAMI, SHOULDN'T YOU BE JOB HUNTING INSTEAD?
AGAIN?
A SINGLES PARTY?
What a pain!
ANN!


Men don't fall for that.
20,000 yen!*
I bet 15,000 yen* it doesn't happen!
WIGGLE
WIGGLE
WIGGLE
I'll use my sexy bod!
WHY? I'LL FIND A MAN TO SUPPORT ME!!
Marry for money!!
*About $20
*About $15

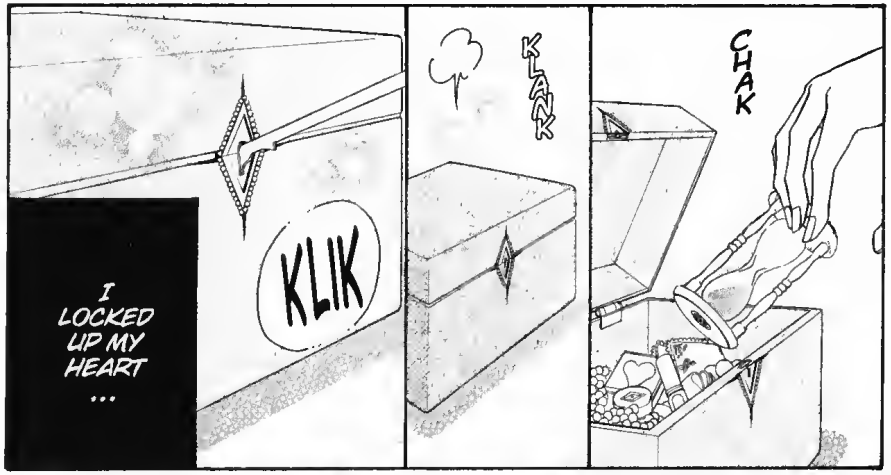
Sorry we're late.
WE'RE HOME.
Diapers
3

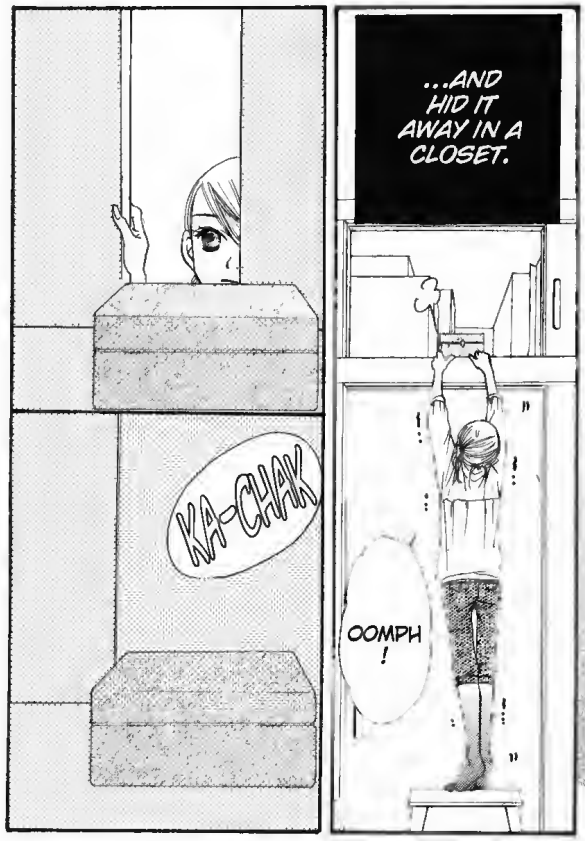

Say, "Ah"

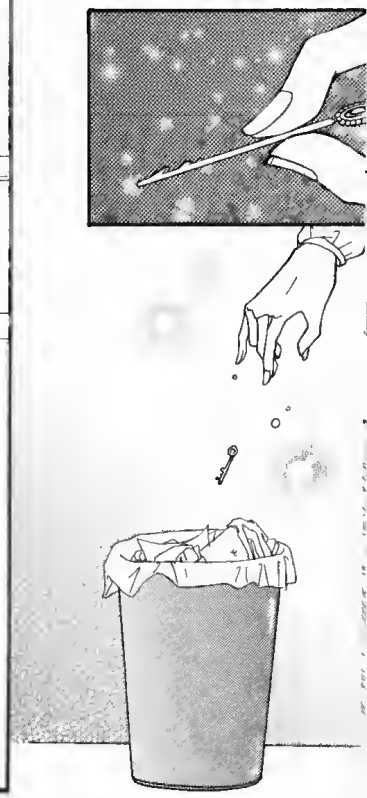
GIGGLE


AND EVER SINCE THEN ...

...THE HOURGLASS ...
...HAS STOPPED TELLING TIME.


I LOCKED UP MY HEART ...
KLIK
KLANK
CHAK

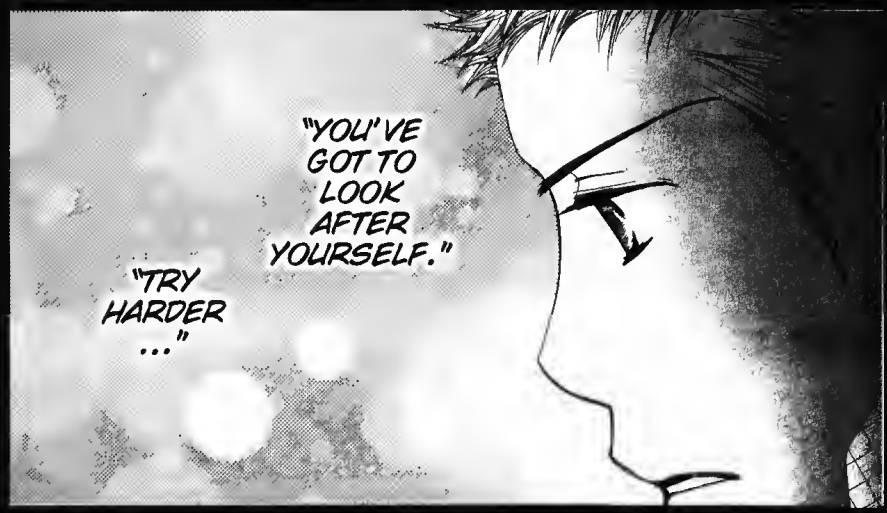

KA-CHAK
...AND HID IT AWAY IN A CLOSET.
OOMPH!



WINTER, AGE 26: EVANESCENT

KEIICHIRO SAKURA
MANAGER
I AM WHO I AM. I GUESS THAT'S KIND OF A MACHO ATTITUDE. IT CAN BE HARD FOR OTHER PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH, THOUGH.

I hope Daigo and I will be together for the rest of our lives.
Ann
"I WILL ..."
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."


"YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF."
"TRY HARDER ..."

KURO PASSED ON...
KURO!!
2ND GENERATION

FROM HERE ...

...MY LIFE BACK THEN DOESN'T SEEM REAL.

SIX YEARS HAVE PASSED ...

EVERY DAY WAS AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER-COASTER.

ONE MINUTE, EVERYTHING WAS ROSY— THE NEXT, I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL OVER.

LITTLE THINGS HE'D SAY WOULD TURN MY WORLD COMPLETELY UPSIDE DOWN!

"SOME-DAY...

"...AND MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...

"...WHEN WE'VE EACH MET SOMEONE ELSE...

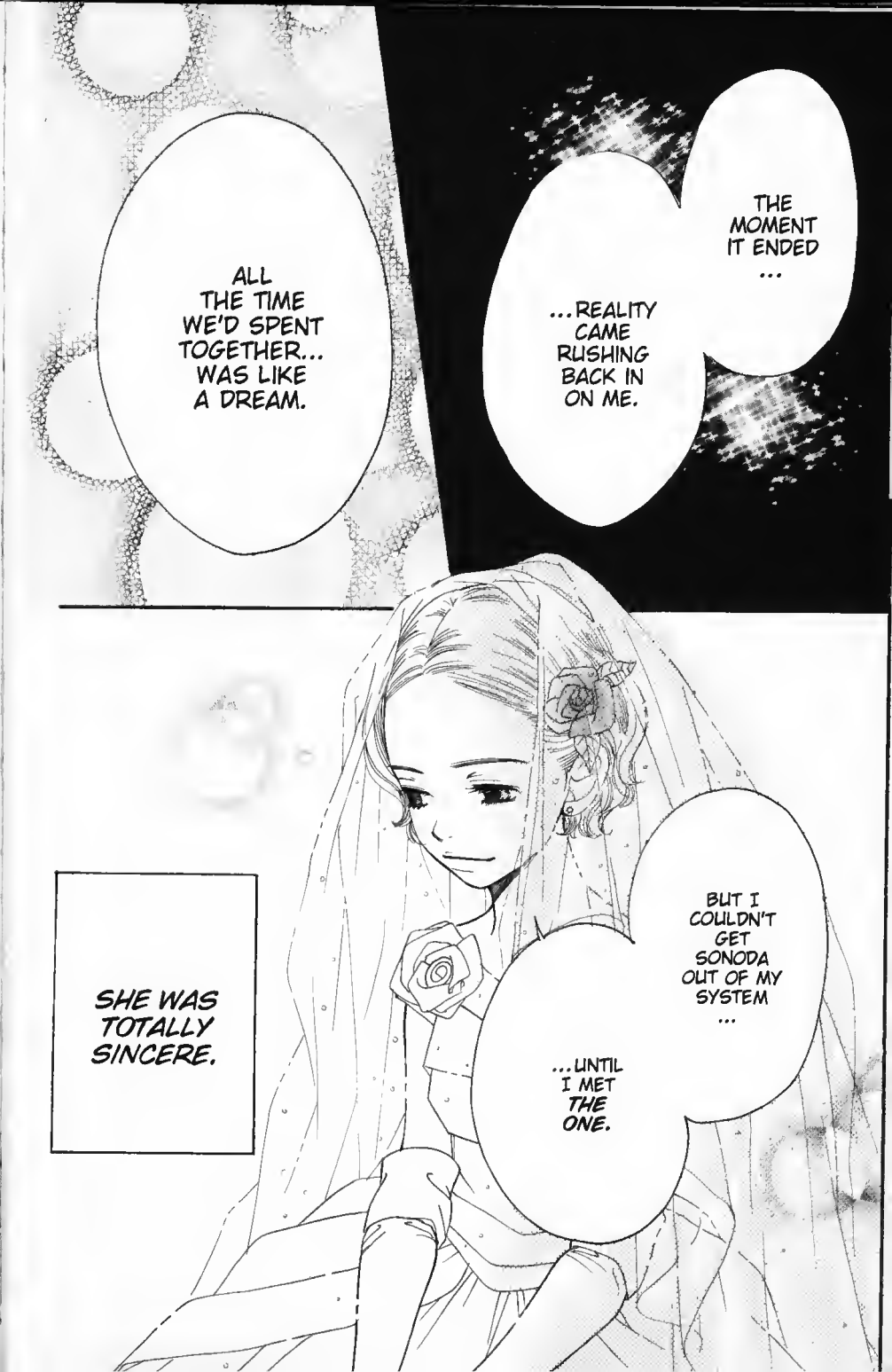
"...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH."

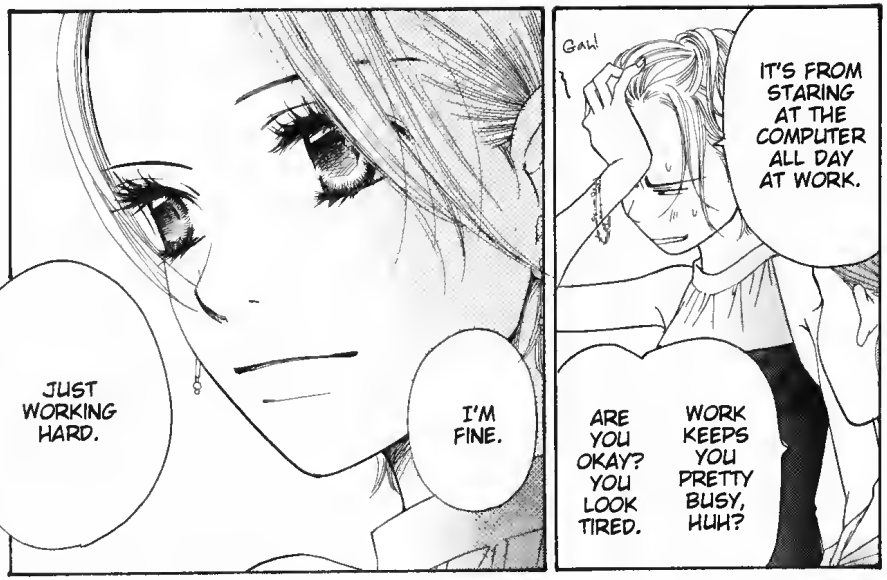
I LOCKED MY HEART...

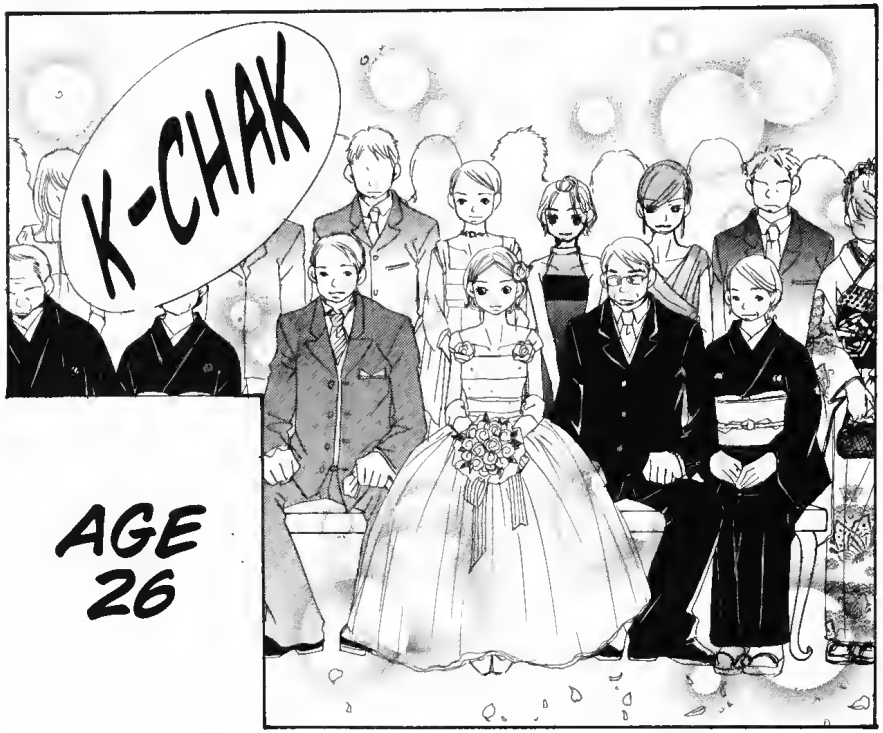
...AND MY MEMO-RIES...

...AND HID THEM AWAY IN A CLOSET.

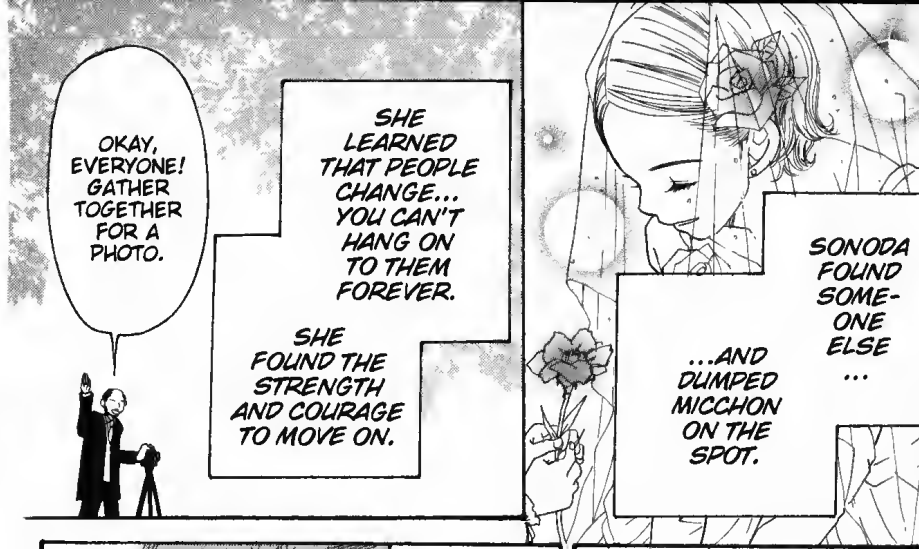
KLAP KLAP KLAP
Congrat-ulations!
I THOUGHT SHE'D NEVER GET OVER HIM...
THE FALL WE WERE 26...
SHE WAS A WRECK ...
Oh, Micchon ...
I'M HAPPY FOR HER.
...AFTER THE BREAK-UP.
...MICCHON GOT MARRIED...
...AND NOT TO SONODA.
WELL, THE WAY SONODA LEFT HER... IT WAS AWFUL!
I don't blame her.
IT HAPPENED FOUR YEARS AGO.

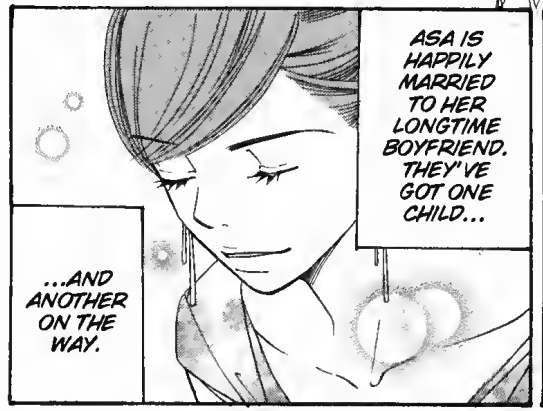

ALL THE TIME WE'D SPENT TOGETHER... WAS LIKE A DREAM.
THE MOMENT IT ENDED ...
...REALITY CAME RUSHING BACK IN ON ME.
SHE WAS TOTALLY SINCERE.
BUT I COULDN'T GET SONODA OUT OF MY SYSTEM ...
...UNTIL I MET THE ONE.

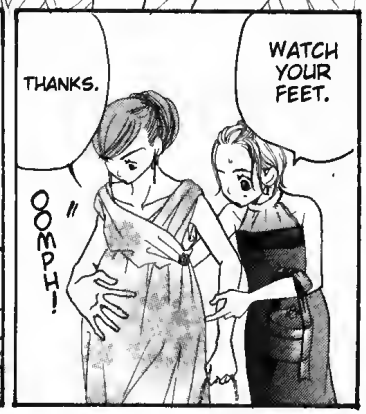

JUST WORKING HARD.
I'M FINE.
Gah!
IT'S FROM STARING AT THE COMPUTER ALL DAY AT WORK.
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK TIRED.
WORK KEEPS YOU PRETTY BUSY, HUH?


K-CHAK

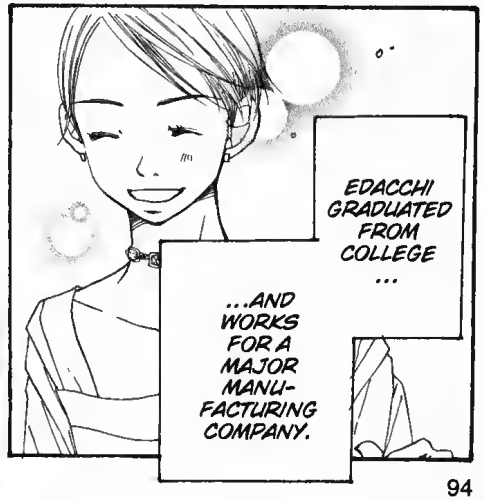
AGE 26

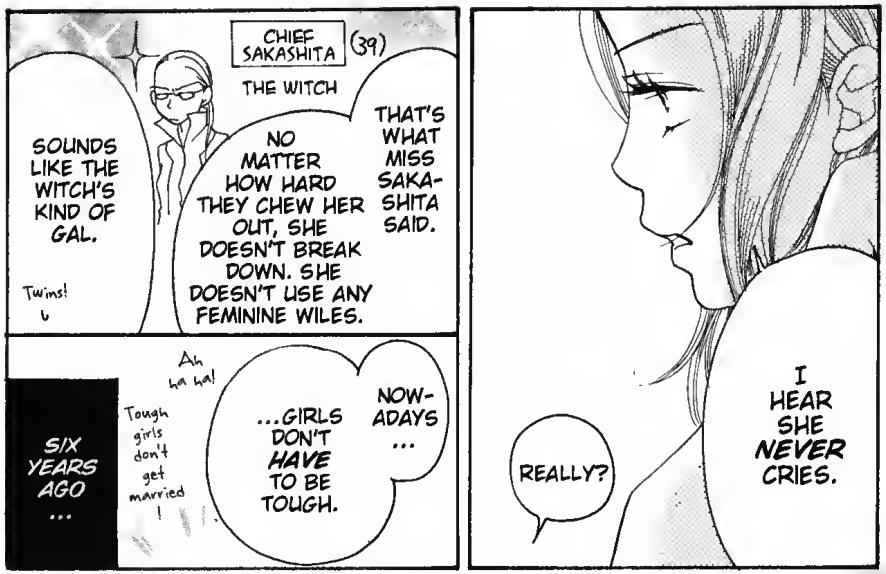

OKAY, EVERYONE! GATHER TOGETHER FOR A PHOTO.
SHE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE CHANGE... YOU CAN'T HANG ON TO THEM FOREVER.
SHE FOUND THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO MOVE ON.
SONODA FOUND SOME-ONE ELSE ...
...AND DUMPED MICCHON ON THE SPOT.


ASA IS HAPPILY MARRIED TO HER LONGTIME BOYFRIEND. THEY'VE GOT ONE CHILD...
...AND ANOTHER ON THE WAY.


THANKS.
WATCH YOUR FEET.
OOMPH!

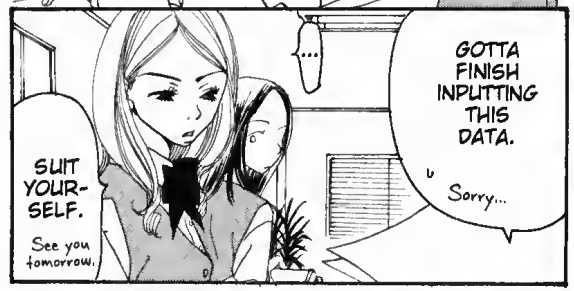
BLEAGH!
REALLY ?!
ANN, YOU'RE FROWNING.
I CHANGED JOBS THIS SPRING ...
HEH HEH ...

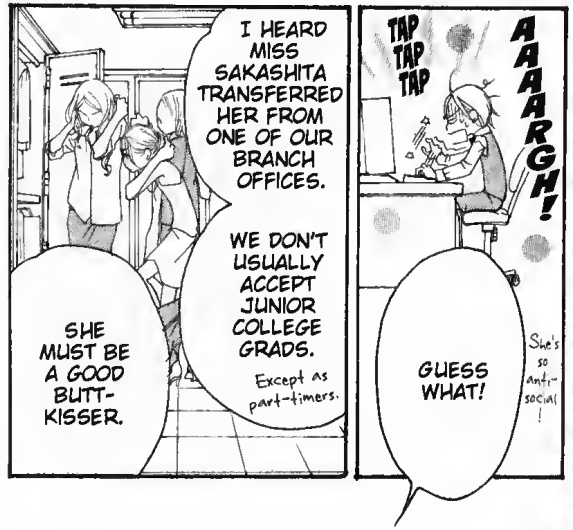

EDACCHI GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE ...
...AND WORKS FOR A MAJOR MANU-FACTURING COMPANY.


CHIEF SAKASHITA (39)
THE WITCH
SOUNDS LIKE THE WITCH'S KIND OF GAL.
Twins!
NO MATTER HOW HARD THEY CHEW HER OUT, SHE DOESN'T BREAK DOWN. SHE DOESN'T USE ANY FEMININE WILES.
THAT'S WHAT MISS SAKASHITA SAID.
SIX YEARS AGO ...
Ah ha ha!
Tough girls don't get married!
...GIRLS DON'T HAVE TO BE TOUGH.
NOWADAYS ...
REALLY?
I HEAR SHE NEVER CRIES.

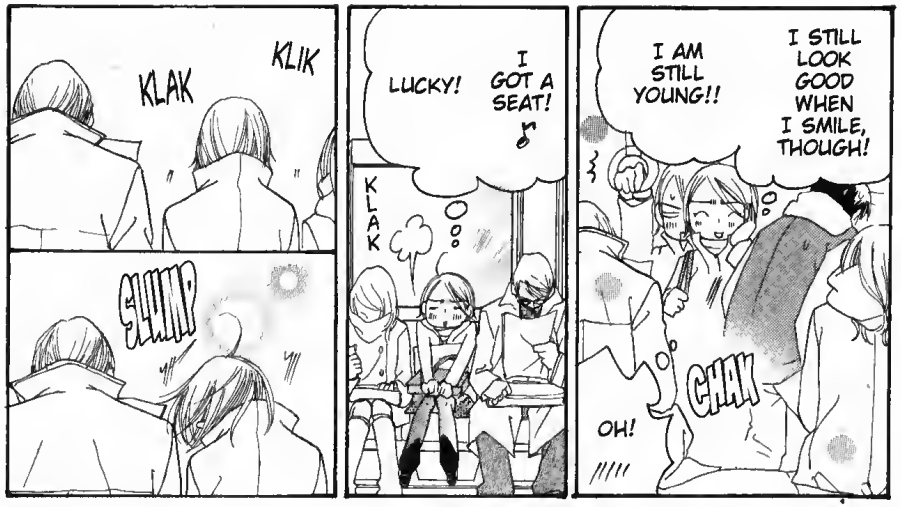
I WANT TO BE STRONG.
I WANT TO BE ...
...THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO CAN MAKE IT ON HER OWN.
"KEEP TRYING ..."
"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
...I SWORE ...
...I WOULD NEVER CRY AGAIN.

TAP TAP
TAP TAP
TAP TAP
WANNA GRAB DINNER WITH US?
Um...
NO, THANKS.


...
GOTTA FINISH INPUTTING THIS DATA.
Sorry...
SUIT YOURSELF.
See you tomorrow.


I HEARD MISS SAKASHITA TRANSFERRED HER FROM ONE OF OUR BRANCH OFFICES.
WE DON'T USUALLY ACCEPT JUNIOR COLLEGE GRADS.
Except as part-timers.
SHE MUST BE A GOOD BUTT-KISSER.
TAP TAP TAP
AAAARGH!
GUESS WHAT!
She's so anti-social!

MY DAY-DREAMING DAYS ARE OVER.
NOW I LIVE IN THE WORLD OF REALITY.
HONK HONK
ANN...


KLAK
KLIK
SLUMP
LUCKY!
I GOT A SEAT!
KLAK
I AM STILL YOUNG!!
I STILL LOOK GOOD WHEN I SMILE, THOUGH!
OH!
CHAH

IF I FALL ASLEEP, I'LL MISS MY STOP!!
UH-OH!
WHUP
GASP

LEAN
UH-OH ...
NOD
DOZE
I'M CARRYING IMPORTANT COMPANY DOCUMENTS TOO.
SQUEEZE

YAWN
KLIK
KLAK
KLIK
KLAK
THAT'S ALL I WANT.

KLAK
KLIK
NOD NOD NOD
KLIK
KLAK
...EVERY DAY STINKS.
So sleepy!
TAKING THE LAST TRAIN HOME ...
MUTTER MUTTER MUTTER
IS 26 STILL YOUNG?
GUESS IT'S BORDER-LINE...
GRIN
CRINGE
I'VE GOT A PIMPLE.
MUTTER MUTTER
I'M LOSING MY HAIR ...
And I've got bags under my eyes...
YIKES!
MY SKIN LOOKS AWFUL TOO.
I LOOK EXHAUSTED.
JOLT
LEAN

GASP
EXCUSE ME!!

KLAK
I GET OFF AT THE NEXT STOP.

I...
I'M SORRY!!
NEXT STOP, HACHIOJI ...
AAGH !!
JOLT

I BECOME ONE WITH THE WATER ...
...AND MELT INTO NOTHING-NESS ...
UM...

ZZZ

KLAK
KLIK

...LIKE...
FEELS GOOD ...
...FLOATING IN WATER ...

KLAK
I'M DRIFTING ...
...DRIFTING AWAY...

NOTHING OF VALUE WILL TURN UP.
You can be sure of that.
OKAY ...
You gotta be careful.
...PICK-POCKETS ...
...ON THE LAST TRAIN TOO.
First, I better call the credit card company... Then...
STUMBLE
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!
THAT GUY FROM THE TRAIN ...
UM, ABOUT THAT MONEY ...
Ow man...
DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH FOR A CAB?
UM ...
IT'S HIM ...
TAXI
Board Here

ANN'S STOP
HACHIOJI
SHINJUKU
MISSED HER STOP..
I MISSED MY STOP !!
And this is the last train!
SHOCK
HACHIOJI ?!
IT WON'T JUST WIPE OFF!
SORRY, I GOT MAKEUP ON YOUR COAT!
All over it...
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
AAAAHH
MY BAG'S GONE!!!
?
HUH?
What the...
I SAID, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
HERE !
MONEY FOR THE CLEANERS!

NAKANO-MACHI!
I took his money ...
NNGH ...
WAIT JUST A--
HEH
YOU'RE SO SILLY ...
...IT'S KIND OF CUTE.
KBOOM
KOFF
He did save me though!
HE'S NICE...
...BUT A LITTLE FORWARD.
And he's got a killer smile...

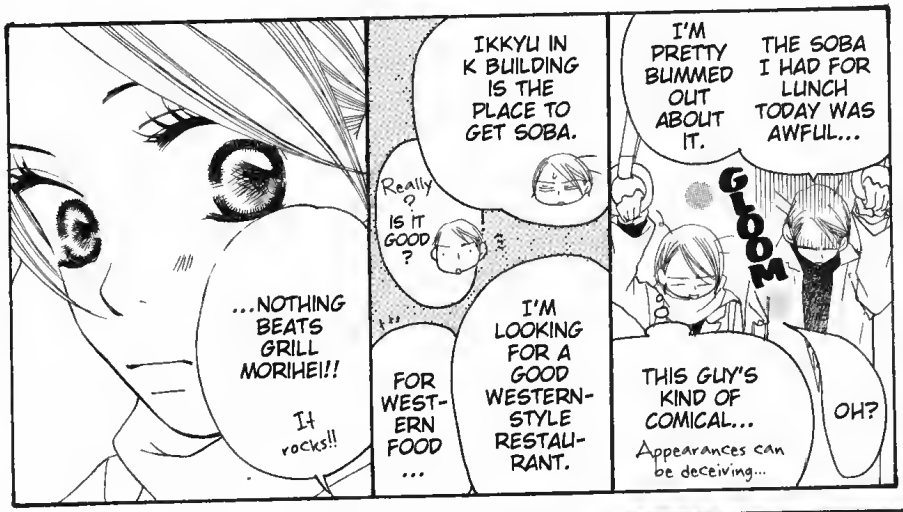
I'M NOT GIVING IT TO YOU.
Greedy!
YOU HAVE TO PAY ME BACK.
Here's my card.
NO, I COULDN'T POSSIBLY ...
HUH?
I can't get home.
DOOM
I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT ...
HERE.
...IS CLOSE TO MINE.
WHAT?
YOUR COMPANY ...
BUT... REALLY, I...
That's too much...
...YOU'RE HOLDING ON TO COMPANY DOCUMENTS LIKE THEY'RE PRICELESS...
...BUT...
...YOU LET YOUR OWN BAG GET STOLEN.
N TRADING ...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
He's a big-shot!
SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE LAST TRAIN ...
M Co., Ltd.
Chuo Ward, Tokyo 104
tel:
OH...
N Trading Co., Ltd.
Keiichi Sakura
uo Ward, Tokyo 104

BUT ...
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO MEET.
OH ...
N Trading Co., Ltd.
YES, HELLO.
About the other night ...
MR. SAKURA ?
THIS IS ANN MINASE. WE MET ON THE TRAIN.
KLIK KLAK
IT MUST BE HARD COMMUTING FROM HACHIOJI.
YES, USUALLY.
I WAS GOING TO VISIT MY PARENTS.
KLIK KLAK
BIG DEAL ...
I LIVE IN A NICE FLAT IN KICHIJOJI, ACTUALLY!!
I'm closer to downtown!
KICHIJOJI
ANN'S HOUSE
SHIN-JUKU
WIN!!
FLICK
SIGH
MWA HA HA!
ARE YOU ALWAYS ON THE LAST TRAIN?
Thanks for your help.
You're welcome.
DEFI-NITELY.
GAWUMP
...WILL YOU...
...BE ON THE LAST TRAIN TONIGHT?

...HE LET ME DOZE ON HIS SHOULDER ...
...FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES!
BUT ...
Trading Co., Ltd.
Keiichi Sakura
MAYBE ALL BIG-SHOTS ARE LIKE THAT.
Is that executive profiling?
"YOU'RE SO SILLY IT'S KIND OF CUTE."
"...YOU'RE HOLDING ON TO COMPANY DOCUMENTS LIKE THEY'RE PRICELESS.
HONK HONK
"SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE LAST TRAIN...
...HE UNDER-STANDS ...
...EVERYTHING I'VE GONE THROUGH THESE PAST SIX YEARS. FEELS GOOD...
...
I FEEL LIKE ...

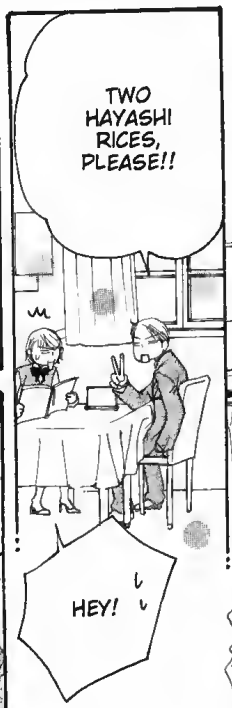
TOLD YOU!!
Good, isn't it?
MUNCH
!
SEE?
HE'S INCORRIGIBLE ...
KNK
HERE YOU GO.
ALL RIGHT!
Finally!

THEY'RE GLARING AT ME...
A misunderstanding...
Ha ha...
THEY'RE SCARY ...
...LIKE DEMONS OR SOMETHING.
THEY ARE?
WHISPER
GLARE
UH-OH ...
HE MUST BE...
MUNCH
THOSE WOMEN ARE COWORKERS OF MINE.
...VERY POPULAR WITH WOMEN.
I hate to admit it...
MUNCH MUNCH


...NOTHING BEATS GRILL MORIHEI!!
It rocks!!
IKKYU IN K BUILDING IS THE PLACE TO GET SOBA.
Really? Is it good?
FOR WESTERN FOOD ...
I'M LOOKING FOR A GOOD WESTERN-STYLE RESTAURANT.
I'M PRETTY BUMMED OUT ABOUT IT.
THE SOBA I HAD FOR LUNCH TODAY WAS AWFUL...
GLOOM
THIS GUY'S KIND OF COMICAL...
Appearances can be deceiving...
OH?

IT'S HAYASHI OR NOTHING HERE!!
Just eat it!
I WANTED A FRIED-RICE OMELET!!
PUFF

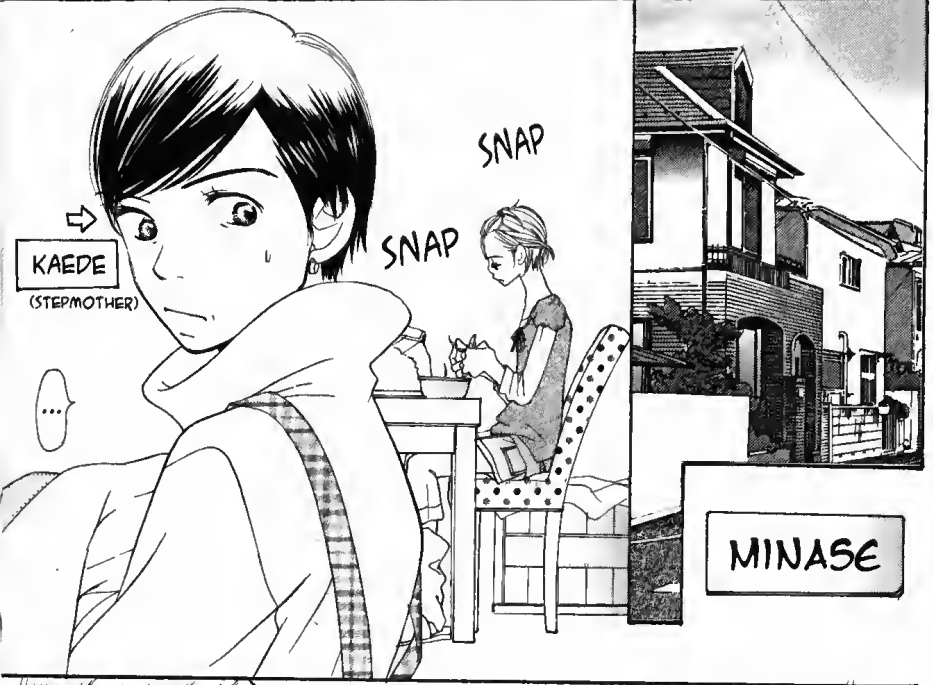
Fool...
IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, THE AGGRESSIVE RULE!
I BET YOU'RE NOT VERY POPULAR AT THE OFFICE.
You're awfully bossy.
FLIP FLIP
MWA HA HA!
PUFF


TWO HAYASHI RICES, PLEASE!!
HEY!

GRILL MORIHEI
RING RING
OH, HI!

GRAPHIC DETAIL
WOW! YOU COOK?
Ground b meat?
IT'S GROSS.
That's why.
...I HATE GETTING GROUND MEAT UNDER THEM.
WHEN I COOK ...
...YOUR NAILS SHORT?
YEAH.
...
KLINK
YOU KEEP ...
...MAKE LUNCH FOR ME SOMETIME?
WHY DON'T YOU ...
TWEET
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
YOU COULD MAKE IT ON YOUR DAY OFF AND BRING IT THE NEXT DAY.
I'M PRETTY GOOD.
YOU BET!
On my days off.

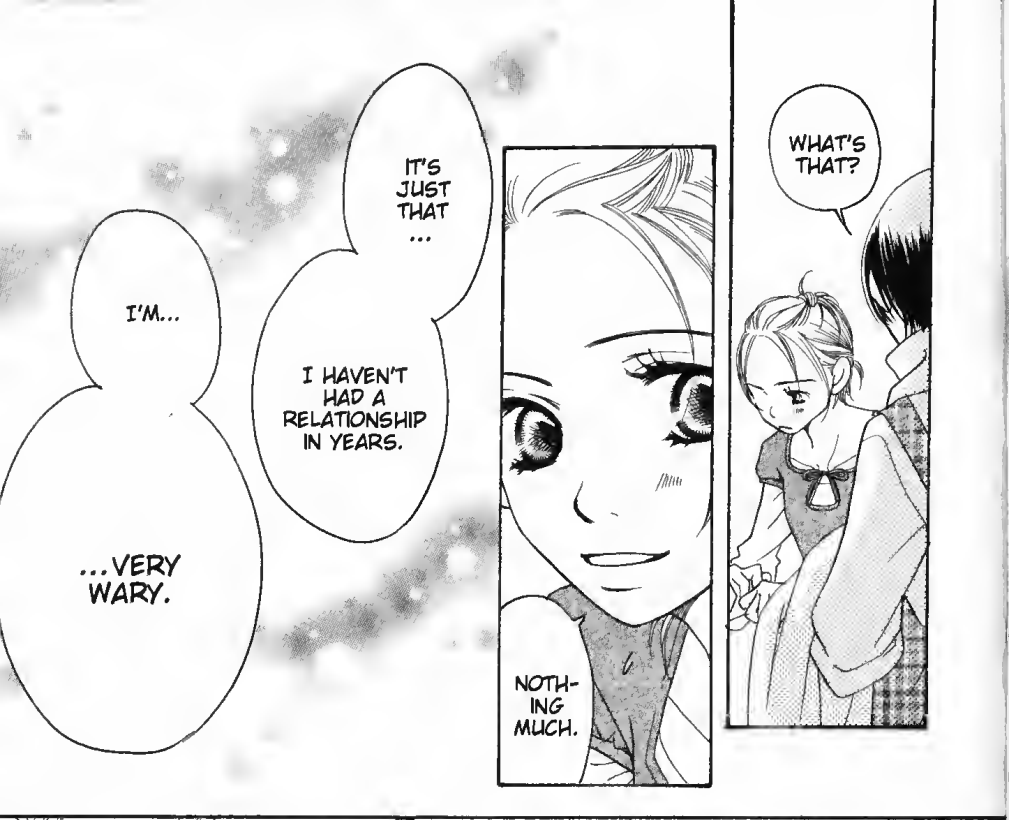
THEY'RE USELESS.
AND THEY CRY OVER EVERY LITTLE THING.
...AND DEPEND ON MEN FOR EVERY-THING.
THEY REEK OF PERFUME ...
HA HA
WATCHING THEM TYPE...
Ouch!
I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY CAN TYPE SO WELL WITH THOSE LONG FINGERNAILS.
...MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.
...HATE PEOPLE WHO ARE WEAK AND SPOILED ...
I...

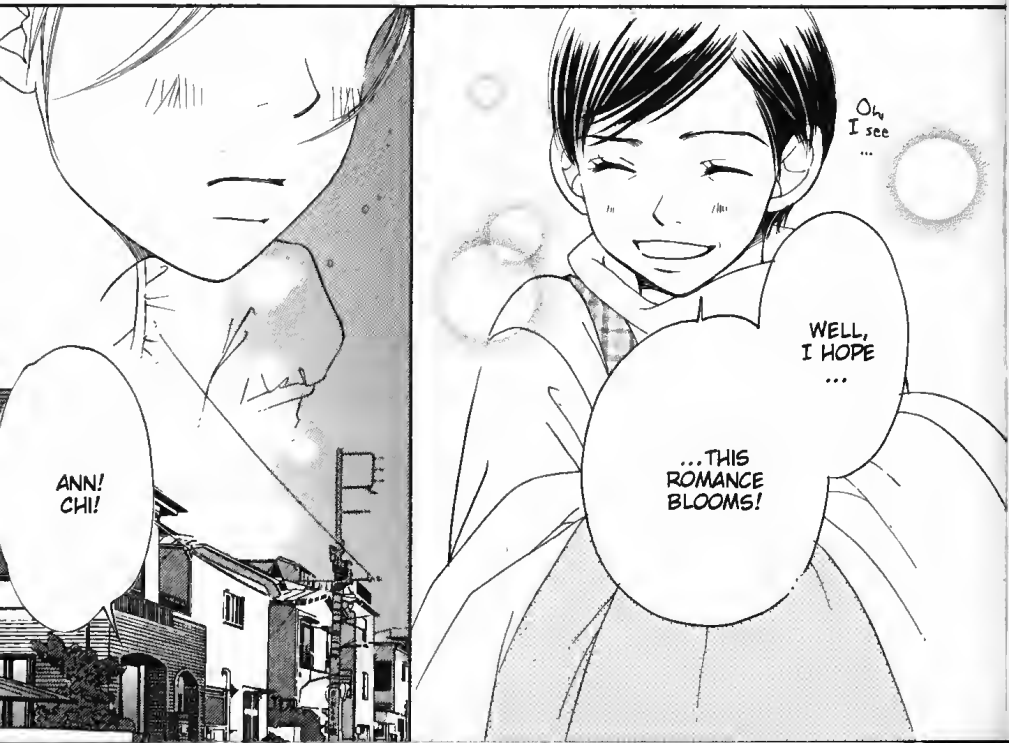

KAEDE
(STEPMOTHER)
...
SNAP
SNAP
MINASE

...
ARE YOU...IN LOVE?
No?
DO YOU NEED TO STRING SO MANY PEAS?
WHOA!
With all that meat and potatoes?
IS SOMETHING WRONG? YOU'RE NOT YOURSELF LATELY.
PIEEE!
ANN?

Tasty!
ALL RIGHT!
HOMEMADE FOOD!
MY MOTHER NEVER COOKED.

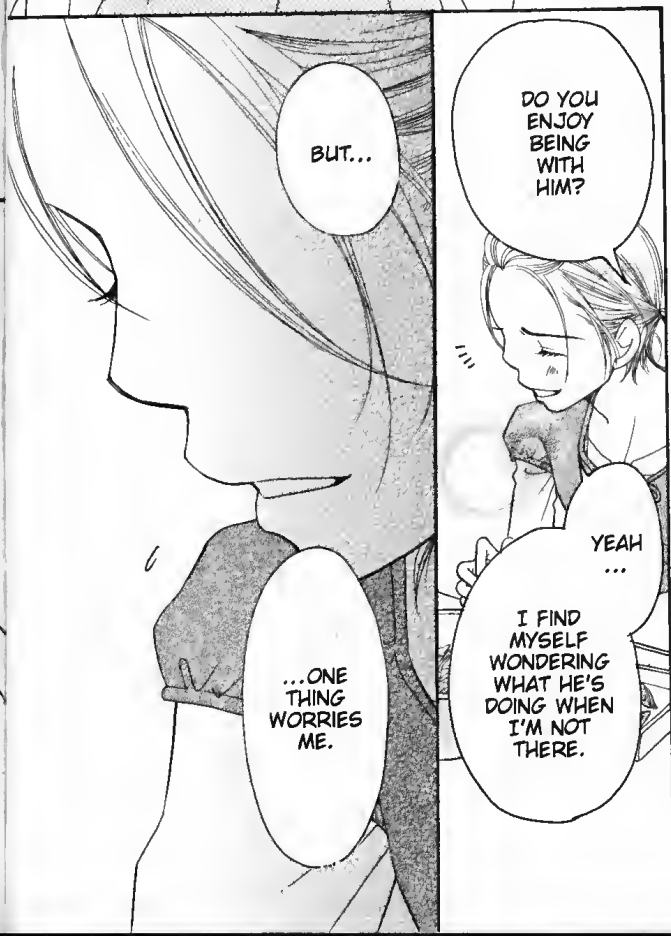
And cold...
I'm sleepy ...
SHIVER SHIVER
...b
This is delicious! What is it?
It's yuba-maki.

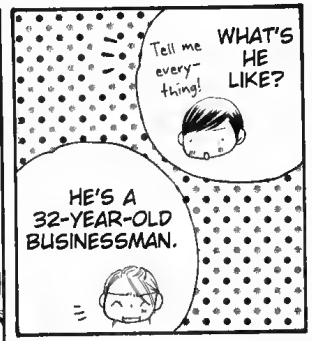

WHAT'S THAT?
NOTH-ING MUCH.
IT'S JUST THAT ...
I HAVEN'T HAD A RELATIONSHIP IN YEARS.
I'M...
...VERY WARY.


Oh I see ...
WELL, I HOPE ...
...THIS ROMANCE BLOOMS!
ANN! CHI!

I WAS TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT IT FEELS LIKE ...
...TO BE IN LOVE.
OH...

I DON'T KNOW.
I'M NOT ...
...SURE.


DO YOU ENJOY BEING WITH HIM?
YEAH ...
I FIND MYSELF WONDERING WHAT HE'S DOING WHEN I'M NOT THERE.
BUT...
...ONE THING WORRIES ME.


WHAT'S HE LIKE?
Tell me every-thing!
HE'S A 32-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSMAN.

HE'S CHILDISH, SELFISH AND ARROGANT ...
...BUT LOVABLE.
Ah ha ha!
I know the type.

And I've just been assigned overseas.
I go to the U.S. next month.
Keiichiro

And I've just been assigned overseas. I go to the U.S. next month.

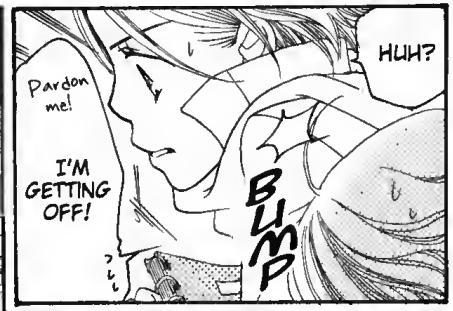
Keiichiro

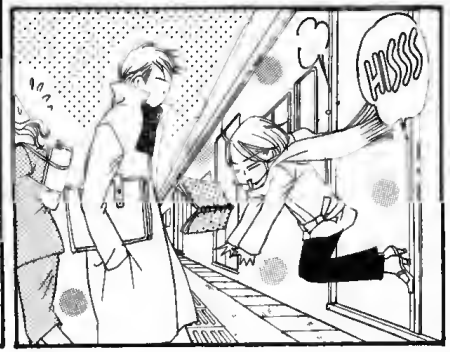
WELL, DON'T ...
...WORK TOO HARD, OKAY?
CHATTER CHATTER
CHATTER
...DON'T FORGET YOUR BELONGINGS ...
KLAK
NEXT STOP, KICHIJOJI ...
WHEN ARE YOU MOVING?
MIDDLE OF NEXT MONTH.
I worked hard on this...
MUTTER MUTTER
THAT'S HOW WORK GOES.
THAT'S AWFULLY SHORT NOTICE.
PILING
YOU'LL ...
...FIT RIGHT IN.
ANN ...
THANKS FOR REMINDING ME!
I'm in my prime!
YOU'RE NO SPRING CHICKEN.
YOU'LL BE FINE, THOUGH. YOU'RE ALREADY VERY AMERICAN.

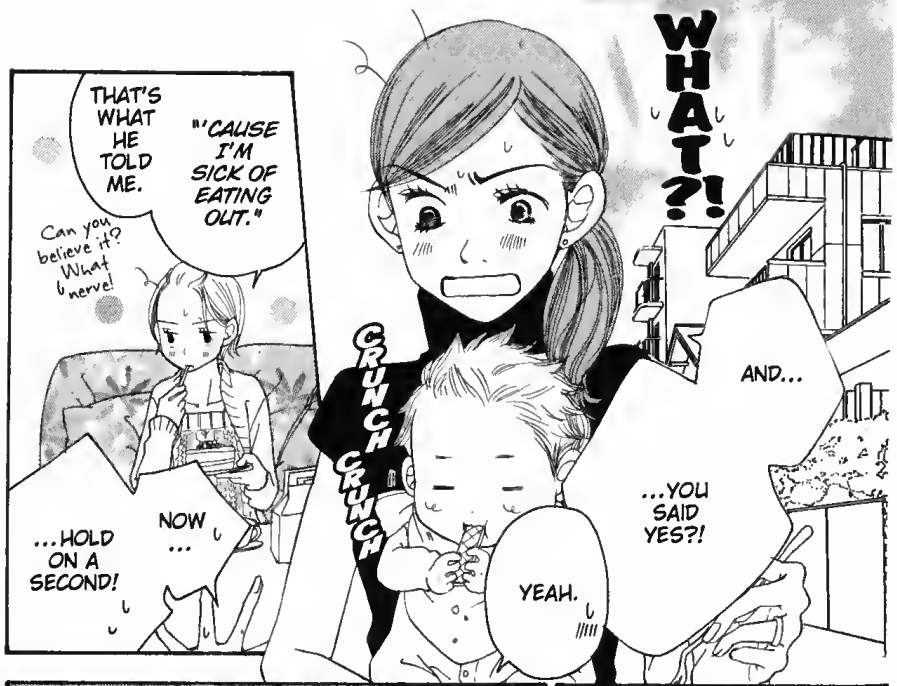
KLIK
KLAK
I WROTE THEM DOWN SO EVEN A MORON CAN FOLLOW THEM.
And they use ingredients you can get in the U.S.
JAPANESE RECIPES.
WHAT IS IT?
!!
This guy...
I CAN'T COOK.
Take it back.
WHAT A MORON.
...YOU'LL GET FAT IN NO TIME!
IF YOU EAT OUT ALL THE TIME IN AMERICA ...
BLOOMP
Recipes
I HAVE A FAREWELL PRESENT FOR YOU.

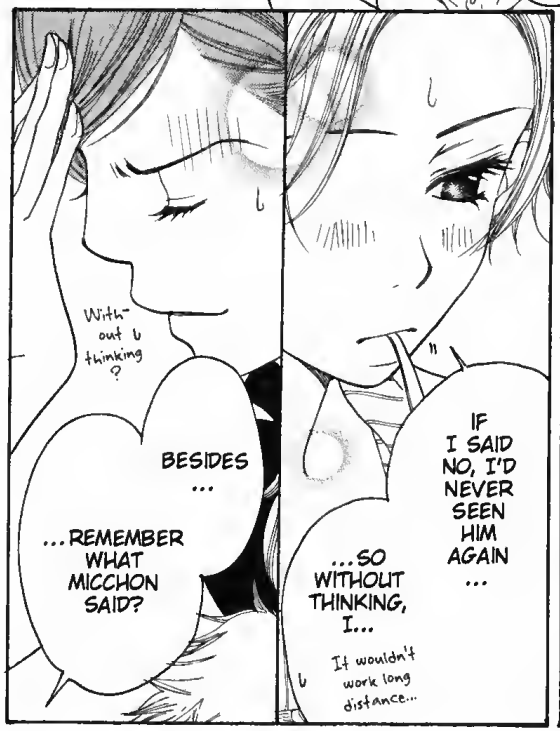
WILL YOU MARRY ME?
THE DOORS WILL NOW BE CLOSING ...

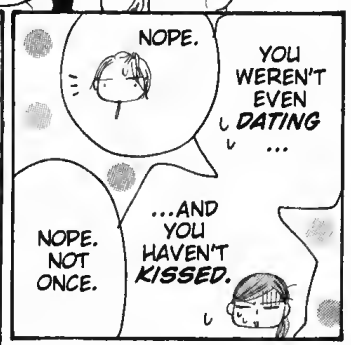
KLIK KLAK
WHOOPS ...
It's the last train


HUH?
Pardon me!
I'M GETTING OFF!
BUMP


HSSS


WHAT?!
CRUNCH CRUNCH
THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD ME.
"'CAUSE I'M SICK OF EATING OUT."
Can you believe it? What nerve!
...HOLD ON A SECOND!
NOW ...
AND...
...YOU SAID YES?!
YEAH.


Without thinking?
BESIDES ...
...REMEMBER WHAT MICCHON SAID?
IF I SAID NO, I'D NEVER SEEN HIM AGAIN ...
...SO WITHOUT THINKING, I...
It wouldn't work long distance...


NOPE.
YOU WEREN'T EVEN DATING ...
NOPE. NOT ONCE.
...AND YOU HAVEN'T KISSED.

...
It's like an arranged marriage!
YOU'RE TAKING A BIG RISK.

I KNOW YOU CAN'T JUST PACK UP AND GO.
I'm asking a lot ...
YOU HAVE YOUR JOB TO CONSIDER.
YEAH. I don't know where to start...
SHOULD WE REGISTER THE MARRIAGE FIRST?
YOU COULD JOIN ME AFTER YOU'VE HAD TIME TO PREPARE.
We'll have a ceremony after things settle down.
I WISH YOU THE BEST.
EVERY-THING IS HAPPENING TOO FAST ...
AND I TURNED IN MY LETTER OF RESIGNATION.
WE ANNOUNCED IT TO OUR FAMILIES.
DAD !!
THUD
Letter of Resignation
YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED ?

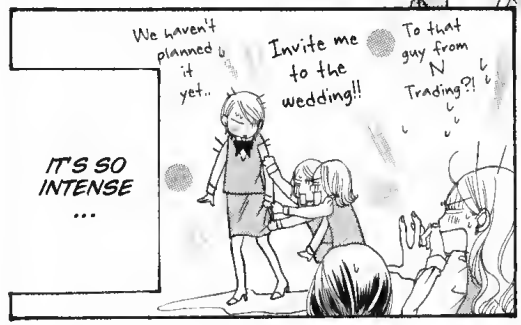
BUT IS THAT ...
...HOW YOU FEEL?
IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE SONODA.
HE WAS JUST HER FIRST.
...THIS IS THE FIRST TIME...
WELL ...
...IN SIX YEARS ...
...THAT I'VE FELT THIS WAY.
...OKAY THEN.
AT LEAST ...

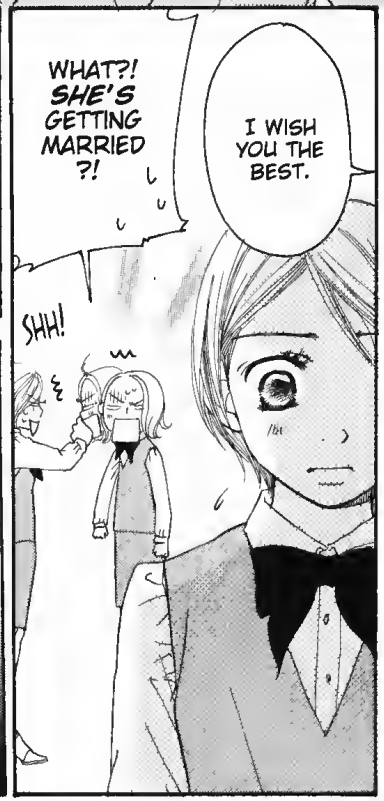
...WE'LL GO TO CITY HALL TOGETHER.
WHEN I GET BACK ...
THANKS.
I'LL BE BACK FRIDAY NIGHT.
Don't stress over the packing.
GOT IT.

It's been years for me ...
I...
WOW!
I should've suspected ...
...
BYE.

IT'S YOUR LIFE.
I'LL WORK HARD UNTIL MY LAST DAY.
YOU DON'T NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
I'm really sorry.

CHIEF SAKASHITA
HMM ...
YES. SORRY ...
YOU'VE BEEN VERY KIND TO ME.


IT'S SO INTENSE ...
We haven't planned it yet..
Invite me to the wedding!!
To that guy from N Trading?!


WHAT?! SHE'S GETTING MARRIED ?!
I WISH YOU THE BEST.
SHH!

There's no time!
I'VE GOTTA GO ON A BUSINESS TRIP FIRST TOO!
LEAVE THE PACKING TO ME.
Don't miss your train.
KICK

DOESN'T FEEL REAL...
I'm so busy...
501
SAKURA
SAME HERE.

I'M NOT AS WEAK AS I USED TO BE.
I SHOULD WASH THE SHEETS TOO.
WE'LL TAKE EACH PROBLEM ...
...AS IT COMES.
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
TAK
TAK
TAK
THEY LOOK GRUBBY.
PING
ROLL ROLL ROLL

CLUTTER
WHERE SHOULD I START?
LET'S SEE...
...I'M REALLY GETTING MARRIED ...
Very highbrow ...
SO THIS IS WHAT HE READS ...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE ANYTHING IS.
Hmm...
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT BOOKS MY FIANCÉ LIKES!
OH!
THE TRUTH IS, I AM A LITTLE UNEASY ABOUT ALL THIS...
I love this book!
...BUT HAPPINESS ONLY COMES TO THOSE...
...WHO REACH FOR IT.

I ASSUMED HE HAD EX-GIRLFRIENDS, BUT...
IS THERE... ANOTHER WOMAN?
OR WAS THERE?
...IN THE LAST HALF YEAR?
I'm not stupid
...
AND IT WAS OVER LONG BEFORE I PROPOSED TO YOU.
IS THAT A PROBLEM?
THERE WAS...

OH...
IT'S A FOLI FOLI.
THIS WAS A NEW DESIGN LAST SUMMER?
I knew it!
YOU GOT IT LAST SUMMER, RIGHT?
YES!! I BOUGHT THE SAME PAIR!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE SAME ONES!
THAT WAS...
...WITHIN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.
...
DON'T WEAR THEM TO WORK, OKAY?
So we don't match!

KNOCK
YOU'VE BEEN IN THERE FOREVER !!
YOUR GRANDMA'S ON THE PHONE!!
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
ANN?
HELLO, GRANDMA?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT A GIFT.
DRIP
I WON'T BE MOVING UNTIL LATER.
OH, DON'T CRY, GRANDMA.
Heh...

SHE'D ALWAYS BUST OUT CRYING ...
PLOP
NON-BURNABLE GARBAGE
SHE WAS WEAK AND THOUGHT I'D ALWAYS FORGIVE HER.
FLICK
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW HIGH MAINTENANCE SHE WAS UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
...
I BET SHE LEFT IT HERE ON PURPOSE.
YOU DON'T CRY OVER EVERYTHING.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE NOT LIKE THAT.

Winter, Age 26: Evanescent -◊-

All of a sudden, Ann is 26! I think that's a difficult age to categorize. It depends on when you start working for a living.

-◊-

I began working in manga when I was a student. I've always wondered what it would be like to work in an office... ✦ ✦ It must be nice to have lunch in a fancy place and wear a company cardigan working somewhere like, say, Marunouchi. (Obviously, I watch too many TV dramas.)

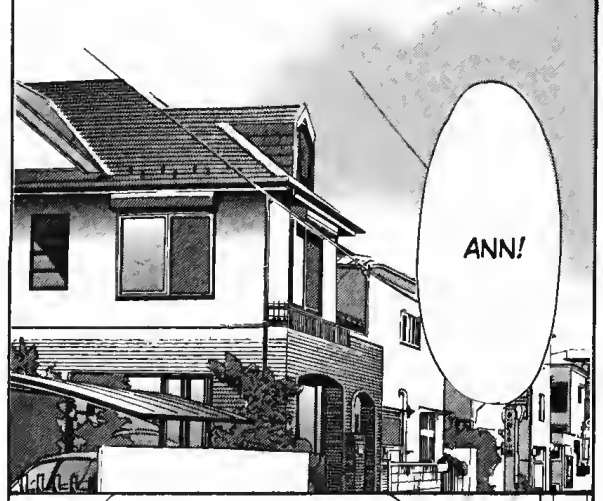
-◊-

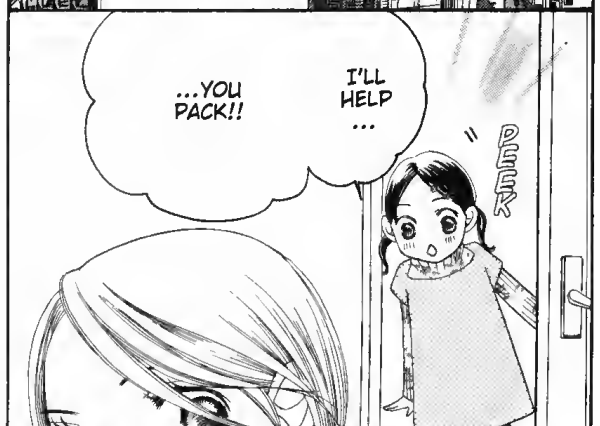
Working women always look pretty. Very nice.

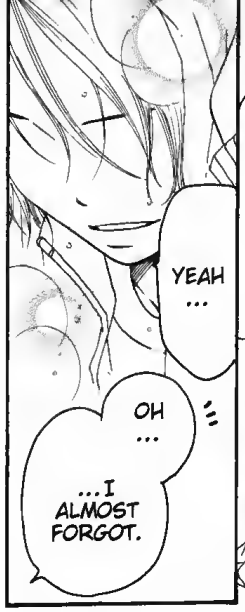
The story is speeding toward the end. I hope you'll stick with me all the way!

See you next volume!

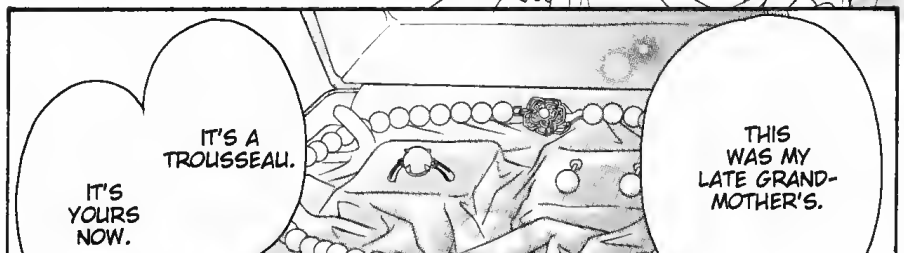
Hinako Ashihara

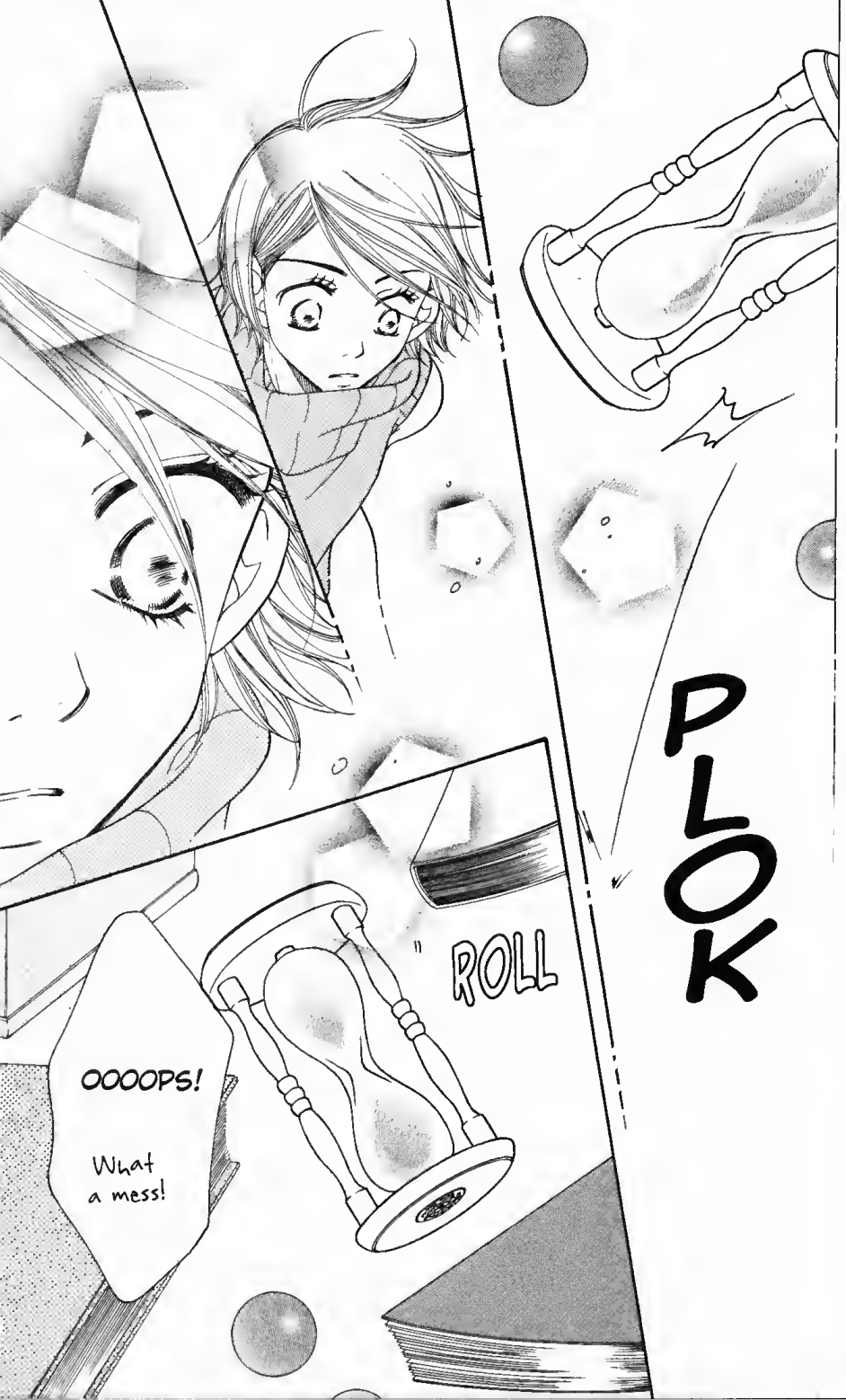




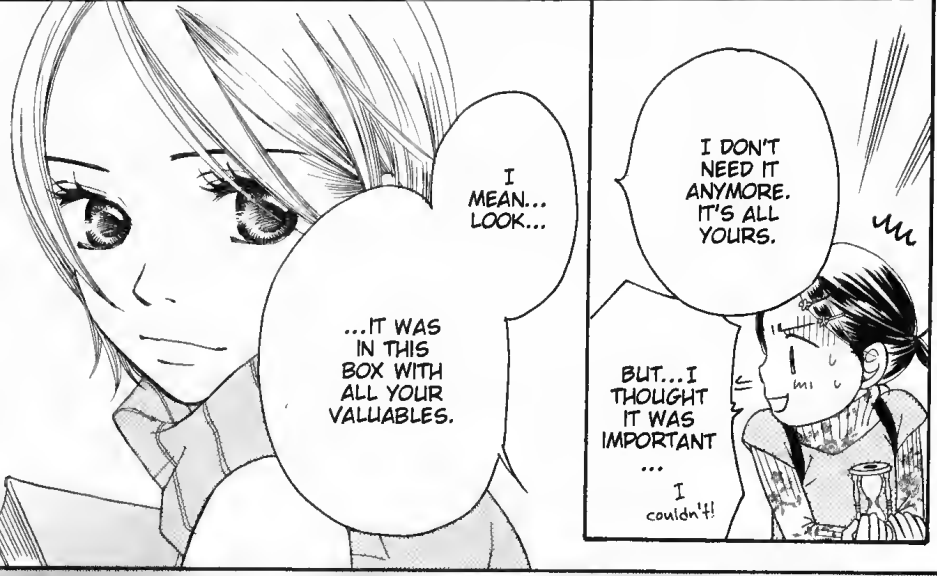


..SHE BURST INTO TEARS. SHE TOLD ME HOW HAPPY SHE WAS.
WHEN I TOLD HER ON THE PHONE ...
I'VE NEVER HEARD ...
...YOUR GRANDMA SO EXCITED!
Heh heh heh! ...
"Even ogres weep" ...

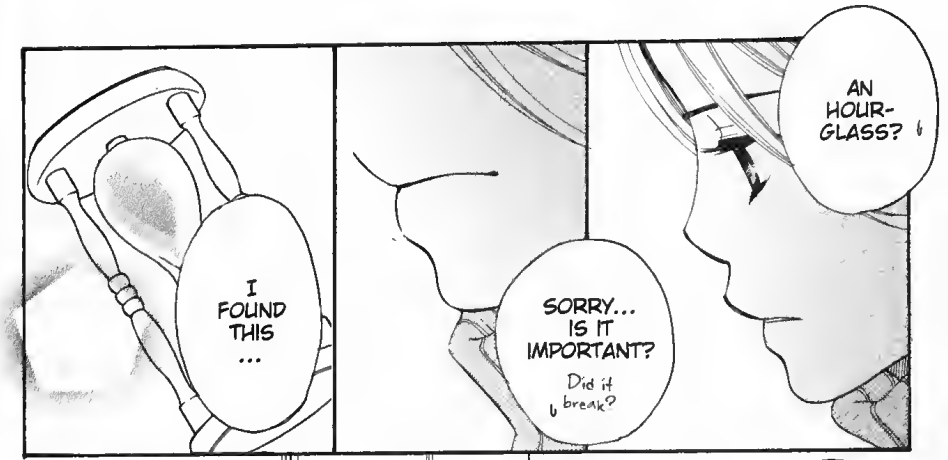


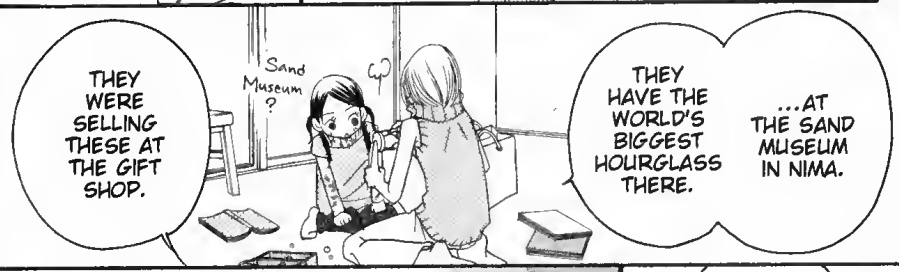

PLOK
ROLL
OOOOPS!
What a mess!

YOU'RE GOING TO GET MARRIED AND LIVE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY WITH YOUR HUSBAND...
GET HIM TO BUY YOU SOMETHING BETTER THERE!
You're too young for that bag!
WHAT ABOUT THE LIGHT BLUE PURSE I GAVE YOU?
NEED
NEED
DON'T NEED
I WANT THIS ONE!!
THAT ONE IS FOR KIDS!
I WANT THIS BAG TOO!!
THIS ONE!
WHAT ?!
SHE CAME HERE TO MOOCH ?
Little brat!
Zip it, Sis!
Hmph! He could do so much better.
WOW! LIFE OVERSEAS WITH A HANDSOME, ELITE BUSINESSMAN! I'M JEALOUS!
FUMP
THUD
FWAP
AGH !!!
WOBBLE
HANDS OFF MY BIBLES !!!
YOU WON'T NEED THIS HOARD OF SHOJO MANGA EITHER.
UMPH


I MEAN... LOOK...
...IT WAS IN THIS BOX WITH ALL YOUR VALUABLES.
I DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE. IT'S ALL YOURS.
BUT...I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT ...
I couldn't!

I LOCKED IT AWAY A LONG TIME AGO...
"I WILL..."
"...NEVER LEAVE YOU."
...
I'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT ALL THAT.


I FOUND THIS ...
SORRY... IS IT IMPORTANT?
Did it break?
AN HOUR-GLASS?


THEY WERE SELLING THESE AT THE GIFT SHOP.
Sand Museum?
THEY HAVE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HOURGLASS THERE.
...AT THE SAND MUSEUM IN NIMA.

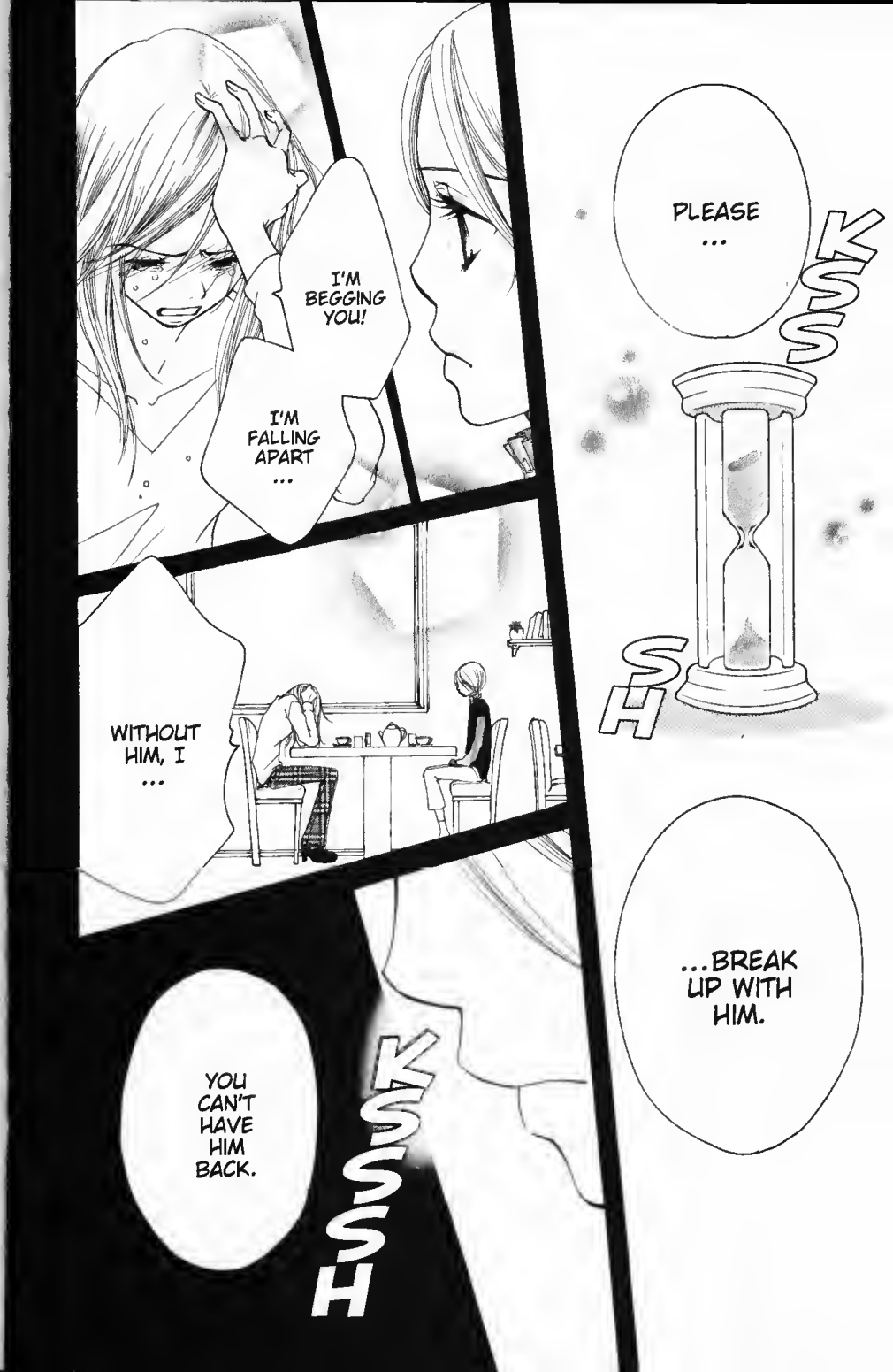
THAT THING ...

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST?
YEAH. SEVENTEEN FEET TALL. A GIANT ONE-YEAR HOUR-GLASS.
Like, this big!
MOM TOOK ME THERE WHEN I WAS A KID...
I SEE ...
One year...

SOME-ONE'S HERE TO SEE YOU.
A friend?
ANN!
KEIICHIRO'S EX-GIRLFRIEND ...
I'M...
UM ...
WAIT UNTIL ALL THE SAND FALLS BEFORE YOU DRINK IT.
TOK
KSSSSH
...SO I LOOKED IT UP ...
And here I am.
YOU WERE WEARING YOUR COMPANY UNIFORM ...
KLINK
HERE'S YOUR ASSAM TEA.
...SEEMED TOUGH AT FIRST.
...SAW YOU AND KEIICHIRO TOGETHER AT A RESTAURANT.
A FRIEND FROM WORK ...

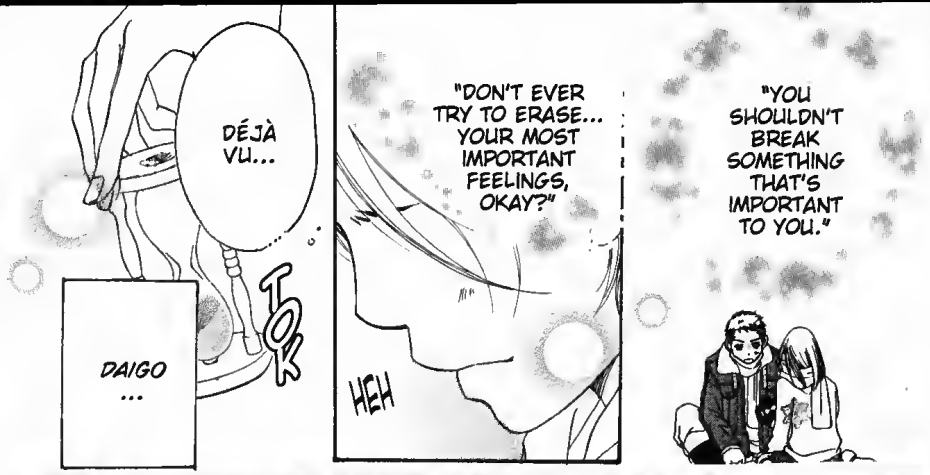
I DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE.
I'M NOT ...
SQUEEZE
...WEAK LIKE I WAS BACK THEN.

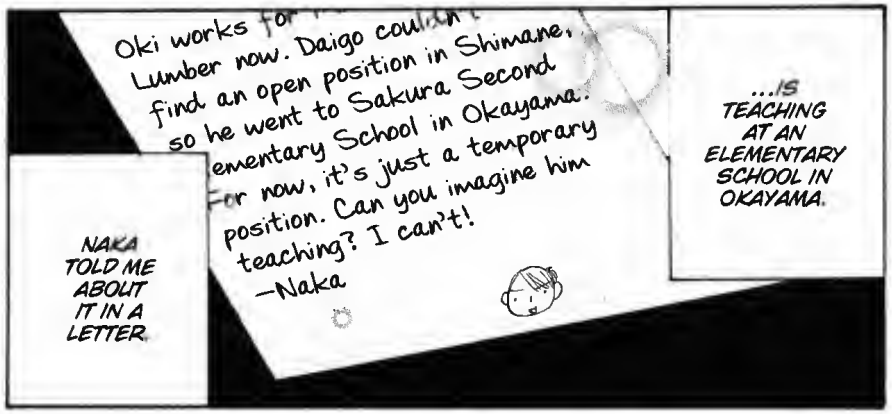
KSSSH
EVEN IF I BROKE UP WITH HIM ...
...HE WOULDN'T GO BACK TO YOU.
YOU SHOULD KNOW HIM BETTER THAN THAT.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL THOUGH.
BUT YOU CAN'T TURN BACK TIME.
!
SPLASH
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW I FEEL!
HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME THAT WAY!!
Whoa...
SHOCK
YES, I DO.


PLEASE ...
KSSSH
I'M BEGGING YOU!
I'M FALLING APART ...
WITHOUT HIM, I ...
...BREAK UP WITH HIM.
YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM BACK.
KSSSH

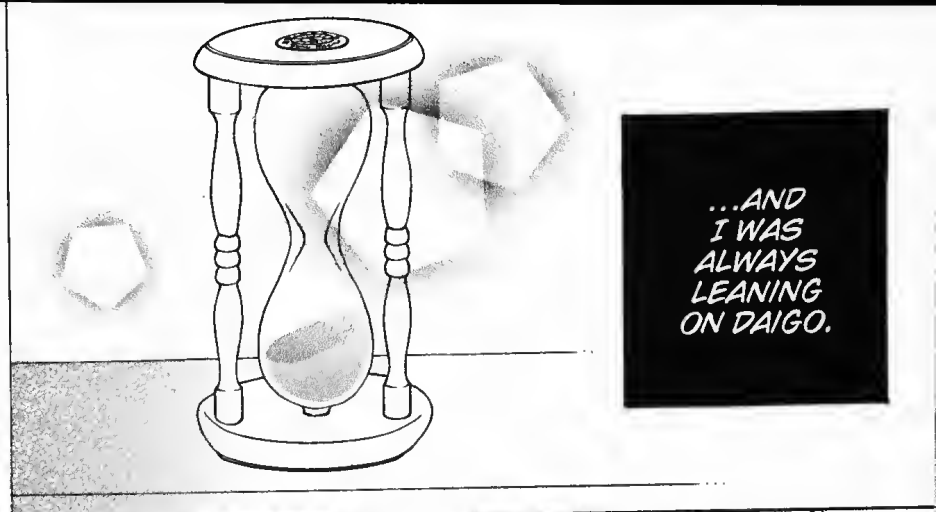
I KNOW THAT ALL TOO WELL.
IT ISN'T EASY TO CHANGE.
WHAAAT?!
I'M ALL RIGHT. I'LL GO CHANGE.
CAT FIGHT.
WHY ARE YOU ALL WET?
AND THAT'S NOT SOMEONE I WANT TO REMEMBER.
SHE'S JUST LIKE ...
Like a soap opera ...
I...
...CAN'T BELIEVE SHE THREW HER WATER IN MY FACE!
I WASN'T STRONG EITHER ...
...I USED TO BE.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE STRONG.
SHAKE SHAKE
EVEN IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU SOMETHING ABOUT YOU YOU KNOW IS TRUE ...
DRIP
YOU CAN'T ACT PITIFUL TO GET WHAT YOU WANT.


DÉJÀ VU...
TOK
DAIGO ...
"DON'T EVER TRY TO ERASE... YOUR MOST IMPORTANT FEELINGS, OKAY?"
HEH
"YOU SHOULDN'T BREAK SOMETHING THAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU."


Oki works for
Lumber now. Daigo couldn't
find an open position in Shimane,
so he went to Sakura Second
ementary School in Okayama.
For now, it's just a temporary
position. Can you imagine him
teaching? I can't!
—Naka
NAKA TOLD ME ABOUT IT IN A LETTER.
...IS TEACHING AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN OKAYAMA.

"TRY HARDER..."
HE TAUGHT ME ABOUT TRUE STRENGTH.
HE ALWAYS KNEW WHERE HE WAS GOING.
DAIGO WAS ALWAYS SO KIND AND FULL OF LIFE.


...AND I WAS ALWAYS LEANING ON DAIGO.

PEEK
...
PAINTER PAINTER PAINTER
...THROW AWAY THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.
YOU SHOULDN'T ...

SOME-TIMES ...
...YOU'RE SO CRUEL. YOU JUST THROW PEOPLE AWAY.
ANYWAY, ABOUT THE MARRIAGE REGIS-TRA—
DID YOU JUST DUMP HER WITHOUT WARNING?
WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
I'VE ...
NOTICED THAT ABOUT YOU.
I WENT OUT WITH HER BECAUSE I LIKED HER.
I DON'T DO CHARITY.
WHEN I DIDN'T LIKE HER ANYMORE, I BROKE UP WITH HER.
IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.
IT WAS YOUR CHOICE TO MARRY ME.
BUT ...
...IF WE'RE GOING TO BE TOGETHER FOREVER ...
LOOK ...

"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
YOUR EX CAME TO SEE ME TODAY.
SQUEEZE
WHAT DID SHE DO?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
GOOD. THEN LET'S FORGET ABOUT IT.
NOTHING TOO HORRIBLE.
2R
RING

HE'S NOT SAYING ...
...ANY-THING WRONG.
AND I'LL NEVER CHANGE.
SENSITIVITY RUINS PEOPLE.
IT HAS NO FUNCTION.
THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.
I SHOULD KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT.
THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN STRENGTH AND SENSITIVITY ...
AND TRUE STRENGTH REQUIRES KINDNESS.
BUT...

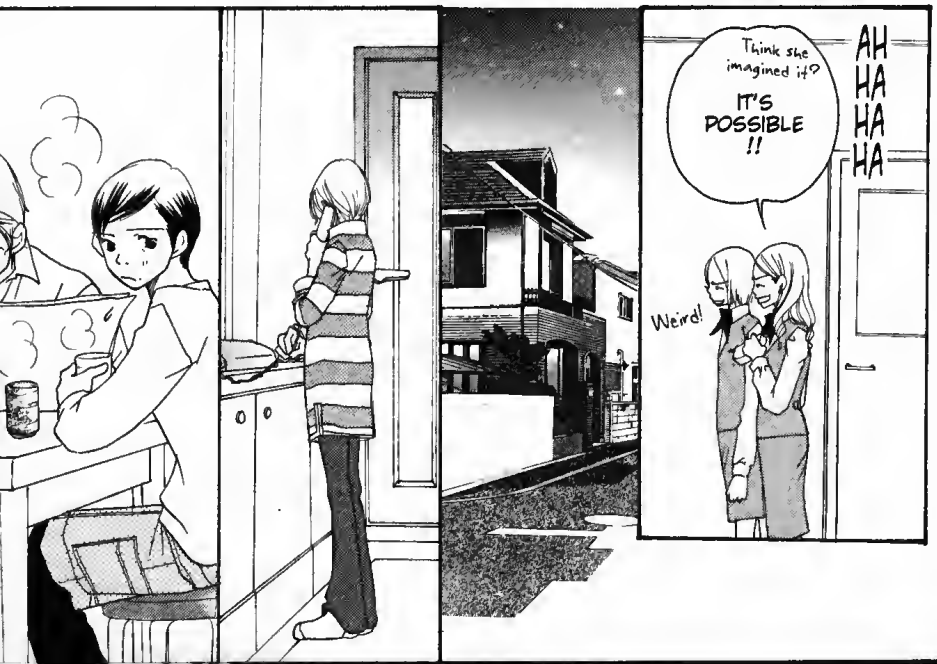
IT'S ANNOYING.
BUT ...
DON'T MAKE ME GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN.
WHY WOULD I STAY WITH HER IF I DON'T WANT HER?
I LOST ALL PATIENCE FOR SENSITIVITY.
MY FATHER WAS WEAK.
AND MY MOTHER NEVER DID ANYTHING BUT COMPLAIN.
BEING BROUGHT UP BY PEOPLE LIKE THAT ...
...
OKAY, I'LL EXPLAIN ...

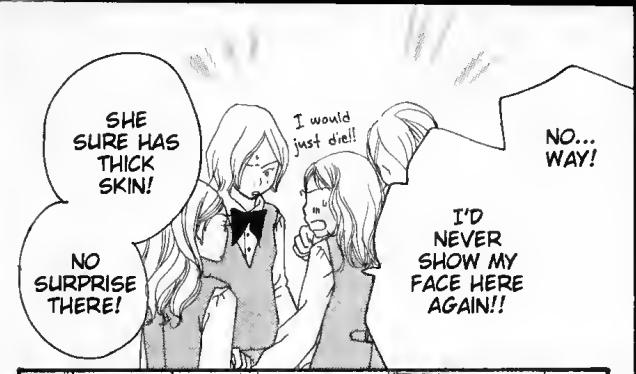
EEP!
HE JUST MOLDED YOU INTO THINKING THAT WAY.
AND NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO MOLD ME.
RRRIP
NO, KEIICHI ...
...
WHO'S THIS "SOMEONE"?
HUH?
YOUR EX?
SOMEONE ...
...TOLD ME THAT ONCE...
PLEASE, UNDER-STAND ...

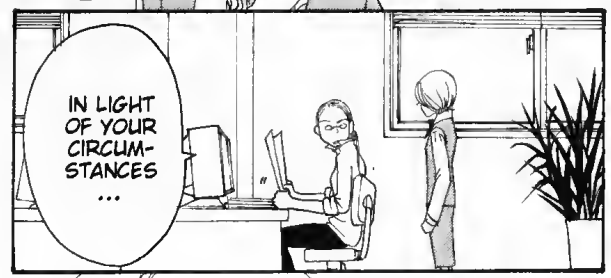
...WHAT'S THE POINT?
Street
tionsh
Marriage Registration
Date
Mayor
Received by:
Date:
irthplace:
Current address:
ceased

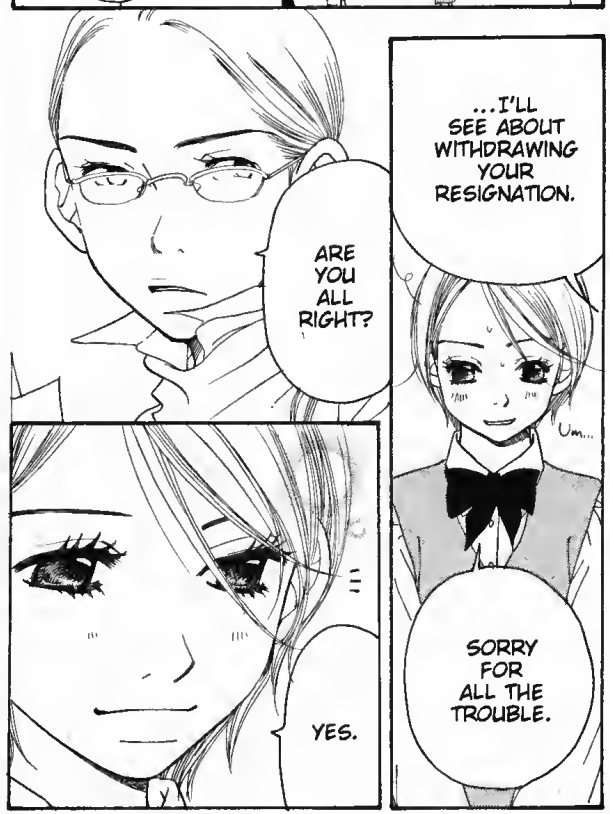
RRRRRIP
Date issued:
tionality
Marriage Registration
RRIP
I WAS GOING TO SUBMIT THIS TOMORROW, BUT NOW...
Mother and Father's name:
Father:
Mother:
RRIP

HANG IN THERE, ANN.
PAT
ARE YOU SURE YOU WERE REALLY ENGAGED?
How about a singles party?
I just got dumped too!
DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN!
SLAP
You too!
THAT'S RIGHT! CHEER UP, ANN!
ANN! I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED!
?


Think she imagined it?
IT'S POSSIBLE !!
AH HA HA HA
Weird!


SHE SURE HAS THICK SKIN!
I would just die!!
NO... WAY!
I'D NEVER SHOW MY FACE HERE AGAIN!!
NO SURPRISE THERE!


IN LIGHT OF YOUR CIRCUM-STANCES ...

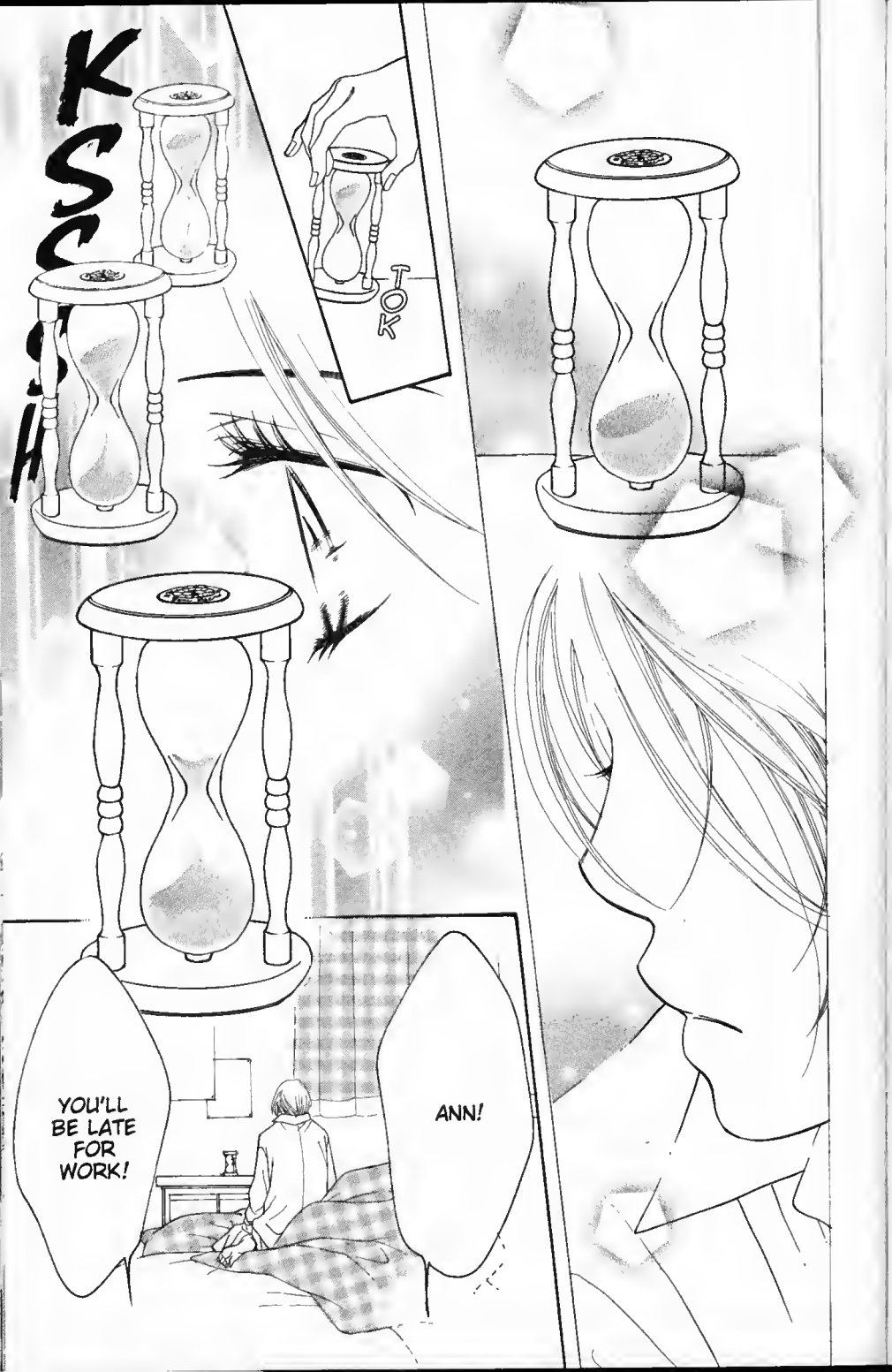

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
...I'LL SEE ABOUT WITHDRAWING YOUR RESIGNATION.
Um...
YES.
SORRY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE.

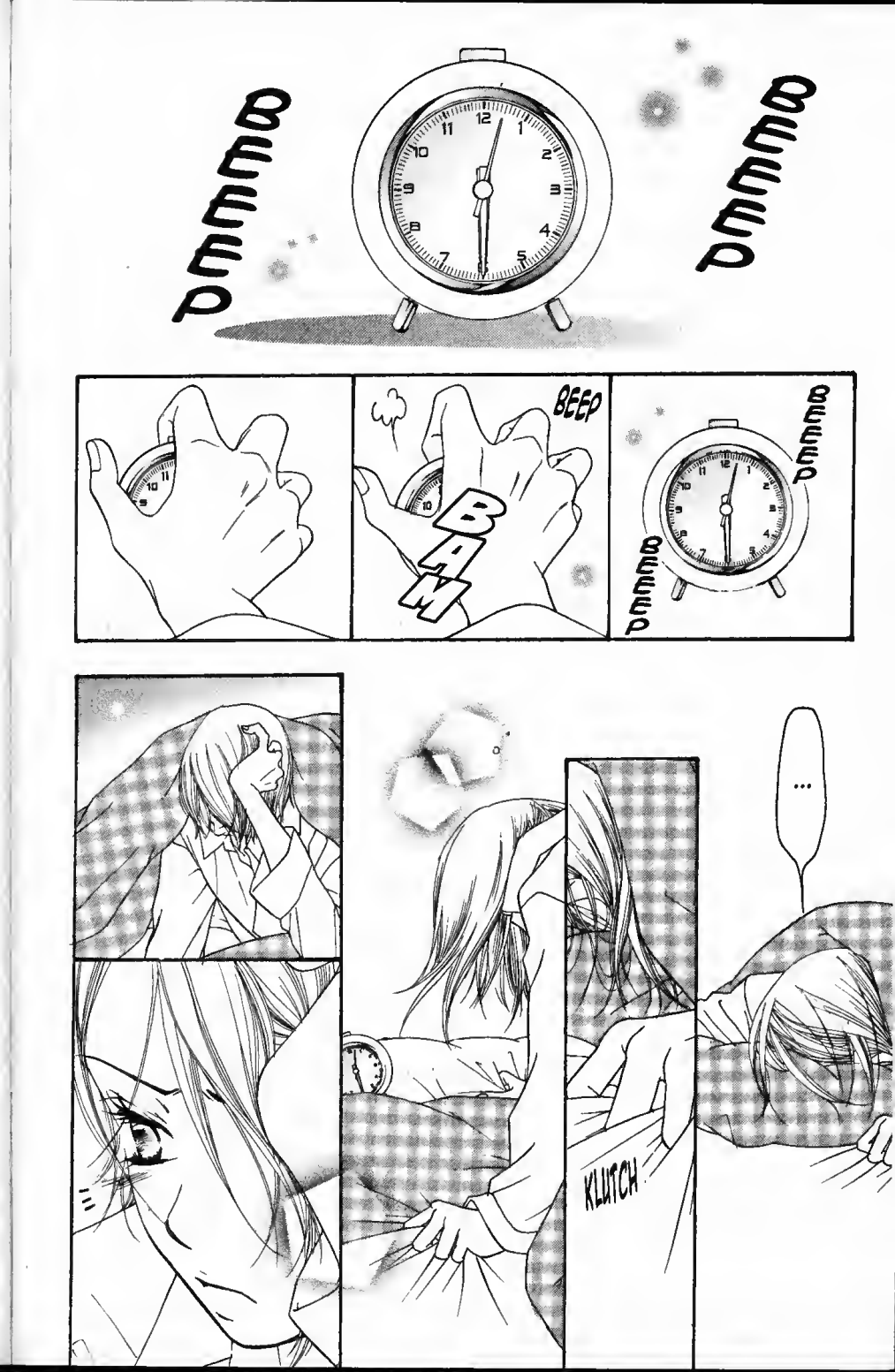
WHAT?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
TOTALLY. I HEARD IT FROM SOMEONE AT N TRADING.
HER ENGAGEMENT IS OFF!!

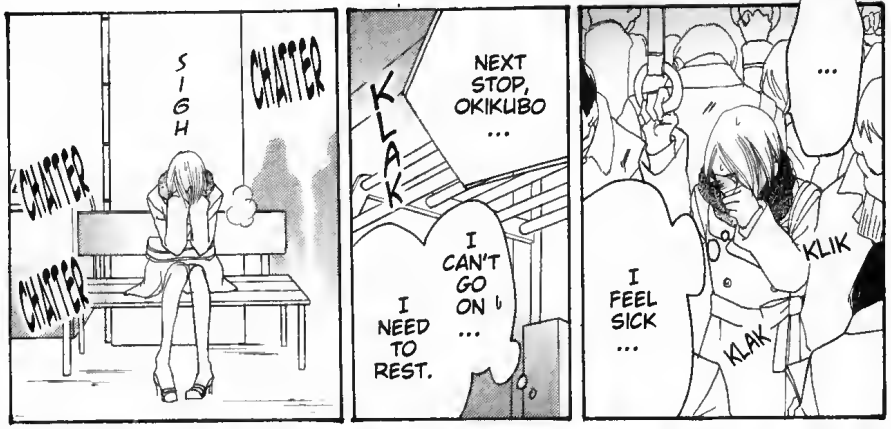
ANN...
...I WANT YOU TO KNOW...
YEAH. I'm fine.
SSSIP
...HOW MUCH ...
...I LOVE YOU.
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
Are you proposing?
HAHA
DON'T LAUGH!
Oh, I'm blushing!

I GUESS IT JUST ...
...WASN'T MEANT TO BE.
YEAH. You're right.
OH...
...NOTHING MUCH.
CHAK
...YOUR GRANDMOTHER SAY?
WHAT DID...
SIS!
PATTER PATTER PATTER
...
RUSTLE

NO WAY!
I want my bag back.
ANN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
What a pain...
I DON'T WANT YOUR BAGS.
Why not?!
REALLY, I DON'T.
DUMP
HERE!
I'LL GIVE YOU MY BAGS!!
I don't need them!!

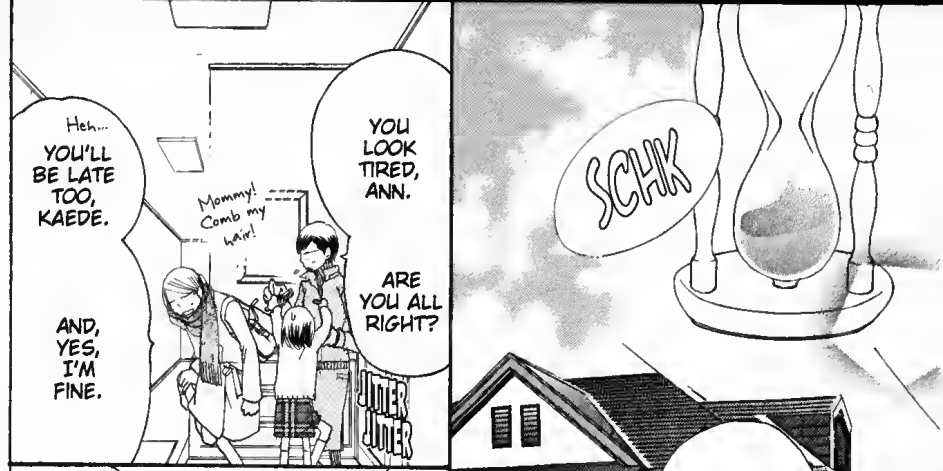

KSCH
YOU'LL BE LATE FOR WORK!
ANN!


BEEEP
BEEEP
BEEP
BAM
BEEEP
BEEEP
...
KLUTCH

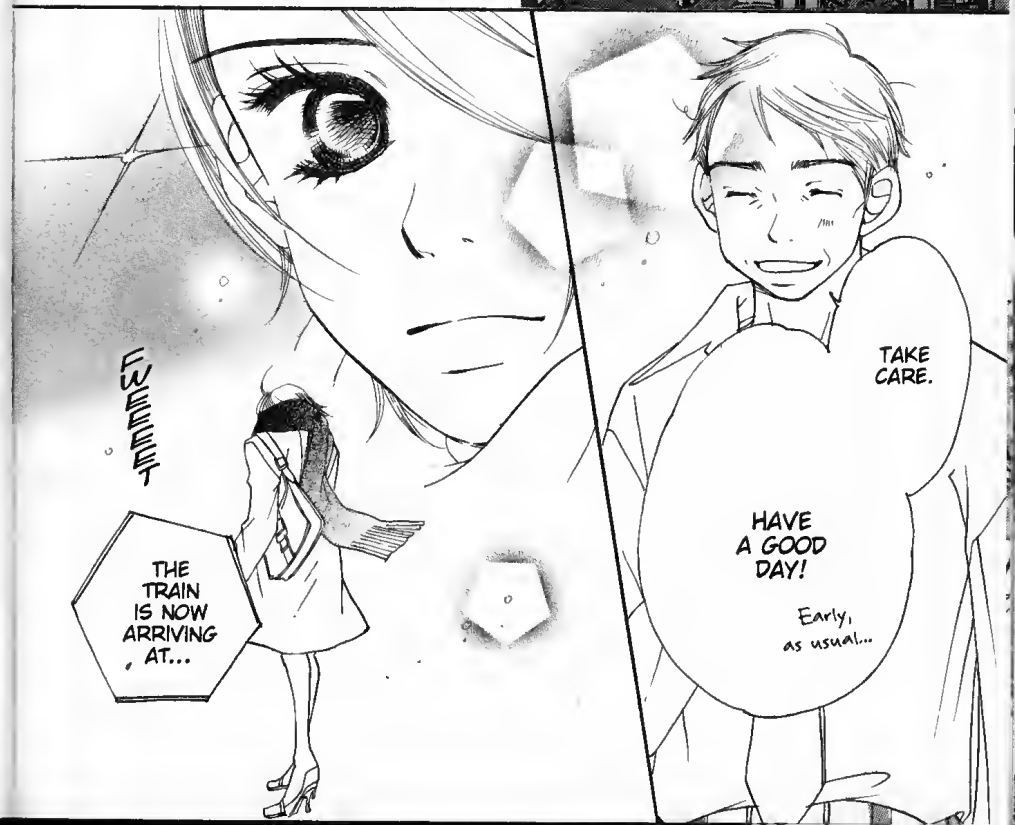

SIGH
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
KLAK
NEXT STOP, OKIKUBO ...
I CAN'T GO ON ...
I NEED TO REST.
...
KLIK
KLAK
I FEEL SICK ...

CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER

I HAVE TO GO...
I'LL BE LATE ...
KOFF
SOME-THING'S WRONG WITH ME.
I'm dizzy.
THE TRAIN IS NOW ARRIVING ...
BUT...


Heh... YOU'LL BE LATE TOO, KAEDE.
AND, YES, I'M FINE.
Mommy! Comb my hair!
YOU LOOK TIRED, ANN.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
JITTER JITTER
ANN! LEAVING ALREADY?
"..."
REALLY ?

SCHK
REALLY?
IT'S GOING TO RAIN THIS EVENING.


FWEEET
THE TRAIN IS NOW ARRIVING AT...
TAKE CARE.
HAVE A GOOD DAY!
Early, as usual...

YOU NEED TO TAKE A BREAK ...
...AND RELAX.
...YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THERAPY.
YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD.

CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
STAND BEHIND THE YELLOW LINE...
HOSPITAL DIRECTORY
INTERNAL MEDICINE
RESPIRATORY UNIT
WEEKDAYS
SATURDAY
REALLY ?
BUT...
SINCE YOU'VE HAD SIMILAR SYMPTOMS BEFORE ...
...HEADACHE, LETHARGY, ACHES AND PAINS...
PHYSICALLY, YOU'RE HEALTHY.

"SHE WORKED AND WORKED-- AND WORKED HERSELF TOO HARD."
"NOW, SHE'S WORN HERSELF OUT..."
YOU TELL ME TO TRY HARDER ...
...AND NOT TO TRY TOO HARD...
...TO HANG IN THERE... BUT TO TAKE IT EASY...
"YOU CAN'T ASK SOMEONE IN THAT STATE TO WORK ANY HARDER."

I'll give you some nutritional supplements.
YOUR CONDITION IS BECOMING COMMON AMONG WORKING WOMEN.
"KEEP TRYING ..."
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ...
"YOU CAN'T TELL YOUR MOM TO WORK HARDER ANYMORE."
"...AND NEVER GIVE UP."
"HANG IN THERE, ANN."
"CHEER UP, ANN!"

BUMP
HEY!
MISS?
WATCH IT!!
TOK
"LOOK! THEY'VE GOT A GIFT SHOP!"
"WILL YOU BUY ME AN HOUR-GLASS?"
IF YOU CAN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND...
...JUST SHUT UP!!

I'VE WISHED THAT SO MANY TIMES.
I HAVEN'T FELT ALIVE SINCE THAT WINTER.
TIME HAS STOPPED FOR ME.
"ONE YEAR LOOKS SO LONG LIKE THIS ..."
It's so big!
ALL THE TIME WE'D SPENT TOGETHER... WAS LIKE A DREAM.
IF ONLY IT WERE ALL JUST A BAD DREAM ...
FROM HERE ...
...MY LIFE DOESN'T SEEM REAL BACK THEN.

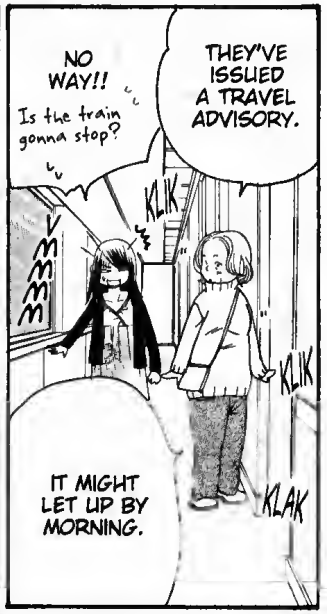
I don't have much on me.
"OKAY. BUT CHOOSE A SMALL ONE, ALL RIGHT?"
Dear Father and Mother, please take care of Ann for me. Miwako
"THEY FOUND HER NEAR THE PEAK!!"
"SHE'S DEAD."
"YOU LIED TO ME!"

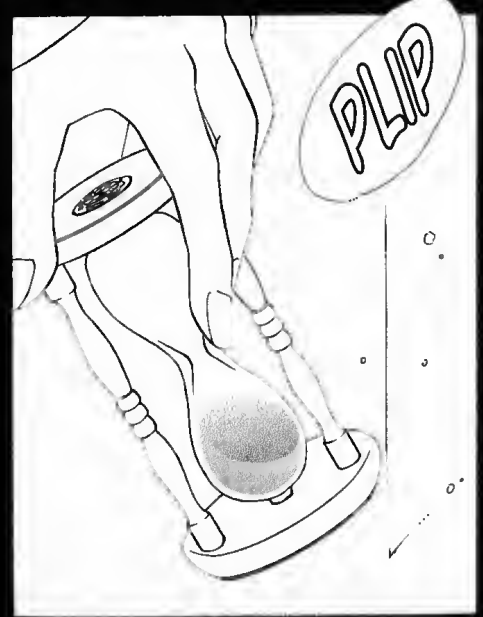
FWOOSH
HONNNK
TSSHH

...IT'S RAINING SO HARD.
WOW ...
SPLASH SPLASH SPLASH

TAKE YOUR TIME LOOKING AROUND.
I'LL BE IN OUR SLEEPER COMPART-MENT.
I'm going to bed.
OKAY! ♡

NOT AT ALL LIKE WHEN I WAS YOUNG!
LOOK AT HOW NICE IT IS!
Used to be so shabby. /////
I KNOW. YOU'VE TOLD ME.


NO WAY!!
Is the train gonna stop?
THEY'VE ISSUED A TRAVEL ADVISORY.
KLIK
KLIK
KLAK
IT MIGHT LET UP BY MORNING.

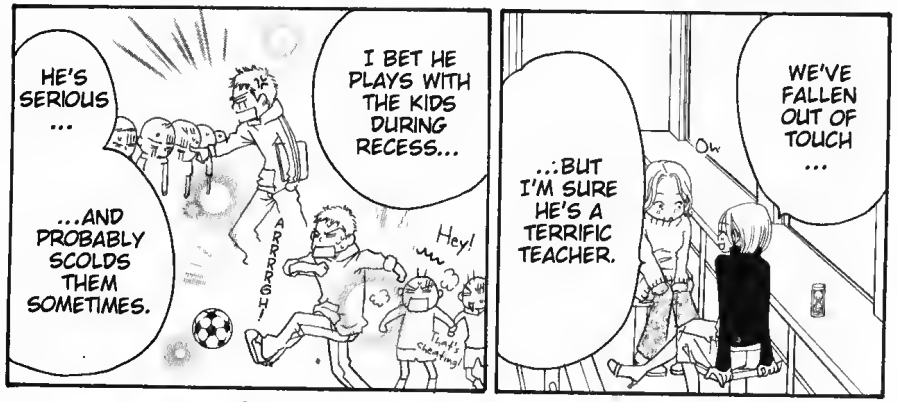

PLIP

The World's Biggest One-Year Hourglass Sand Calendar
Dimensions
Height 17 FT
Diameter 3 FT
Weight of Sand 1 0 T
"THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ONE-YEAR HOURGLASS ..."
"SEVENTEEN FEET TALL AND ONE TON OF SAND..."

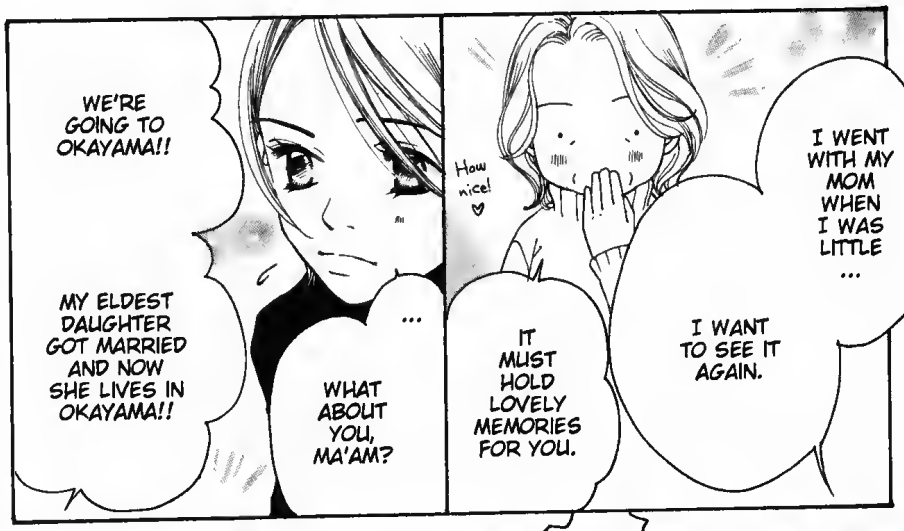
UH-OH ...
AM I TALKING TOO MUCH ...?
My daughter says I never shut up.
HEH HEH HEH HEH
NO, NOT AT ALL.
BACK THEN, IT WASN'T SO NICELY FURBISHED!
HEH
I TOOK THE NIGHT TRAIN A LOT WHEN I WAS YOUNGER ...
...BETWEEN TOKYO AND OSAKA.
WHEEEE!!
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?
SHE...
...REMINDS ME OF DAIGO'S MOM A LITTLE.
...AT THE NIMA SAND MUSEUM.
I WANT TO SEE ...
...THE BIG ONE-YEAR HOURGLASS ...
HONNK
SHIMANE.
IZUMOSHI STATION.
TSSHH
OH. THAT'S THE LAST STOP.

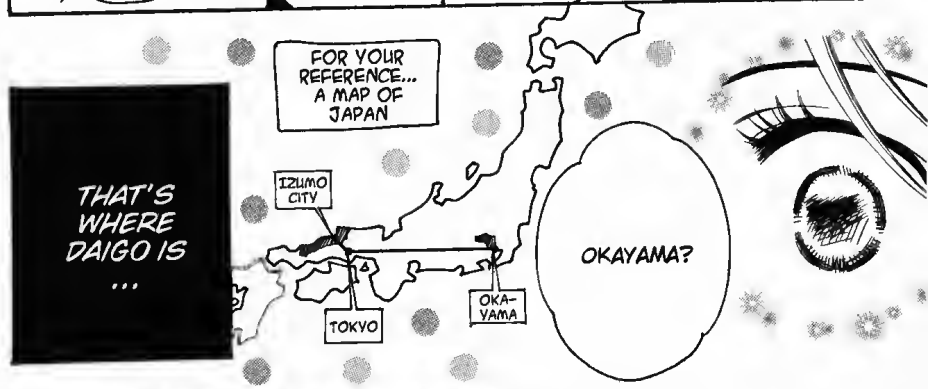
RATTLE
KLIK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
HELLO, MISS...
ARE YOU ALL BY YOURSELF?
IT'S UNUSUAL FOR A YOUNG WOMAN TO TRAVEL ALONE ON THE NIGHT TRAIN.
OH... IS IT?
I SUPPOSE THEY USUALLY RIDE THE SHINKANSEN. IT'S FASTER...
MY DAUGHTER WANTED TO GO ON THE NOZOMI LINE...
...BUT I INSISTED ON THIS ONE.
...BUT SOMETIMES IT'S NICE TO TAKE A LEISURELY RIDE LIKE THIS, ISN'T IT?

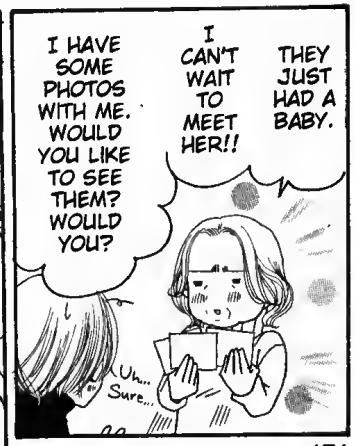
I HAVE A FRIEND ...
...WHO LIVES IN OKAYAMA.
HE TEACHES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
But my daughter's a fighter...
HEH
LOOKS THAT WAY, DOESN'T IT?
WOW! WHAT A HAPPY FAMILY!
And a big one too!
ACTUALLY, MY DAUGHTER AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS!
NO JOKE!
No way!
That woman is scary!


HE'S SERIOUS ...
...AND PROBABLY SCOLDS THEM SOMETIMES.
I BET HE PLAYS WITH THE KIDS DURING RECESS...
ARRRGH!
Hey!
That's cheating!
WE'VE FALLEN OUT OF TOUCH ...
...BUT I'M SURE HE'S A TERRIFIC TEACHER.
Ow

AND THE KIDS PROBABLY CALL HIM BY HIS FIRST NAME.
Call me Mr. Kitamura!
My jello belongs to me!
Gimme your jello.
Daigo, eat my carrots!
AND HE'LL MAKE MISTAKES IN ADDITION.
Wrong again, Daigo.
Daigo, that's wrong.


WE'RE GOING TO OKAYAMA!!
MY ELDEST DAUGHTER GOT MARRIED AND NOW SHE LIVES IN OKAYAMA!!
...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MA'AM?
How nice!
IT MUST HOLD LOVELY MEMORIES FOR YOU.
I WENT WITH MY MOM WHEN I WAS LITTLE ...
I WANT TO SEE IT AGAIN.


THAT'S WHERE DAIGO IS ...
FOR YOUR REFERENCE... A MAP OF JAPAN
IZUMO CITY
TOKYO
OKA-YAMA
OKAYAMA?


I HAVE SOME PHOTOS WITH ME. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THEM? WOULD YOU?
I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HER!!
THEY JUST HAD A BABY.
Uh... Sure...

...I HOPE...
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THIS AND LAUGH.
MISS ...
...YOU LOOK A LITTLE WORN OUT.
YOU SHOULD GET SOME REST.
YES... GOOD NIGHT.
SORRY ...
...FOR TALKING YOUR LEG OFF.
KLAK
KLIK
RATTLE
YES.
SOME-DAY...
...AFTER WE'VE BOTH MET SOMEONE ELSE...
...AND GOTTEN MARRIED AND HAD KIDS...
AH HA HA
THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY HE IS.
...
IS HE... IMPORTANT TO YOU?

MEOW
MEOW
...DISSOLVE INTO BUBBLES ...
...MAYBE I CAN FINALLY REST...
GLUB
IF I DISAPPEAR INTO IT...
GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB
I'M DRIFTING ...
ZSSSSHH
KLAK
...DRIFTING AWAY...
KLAK
FEELS GOOD ...
MMMMMM
...LIKE FLOATING IN WATER.
KLAK

TSSHH
IT'S POURING OUT THERE!
TSSHH
PLOK
HEADACHE RELIEF
"GRANDMA ..."
MEOW
TSSHH

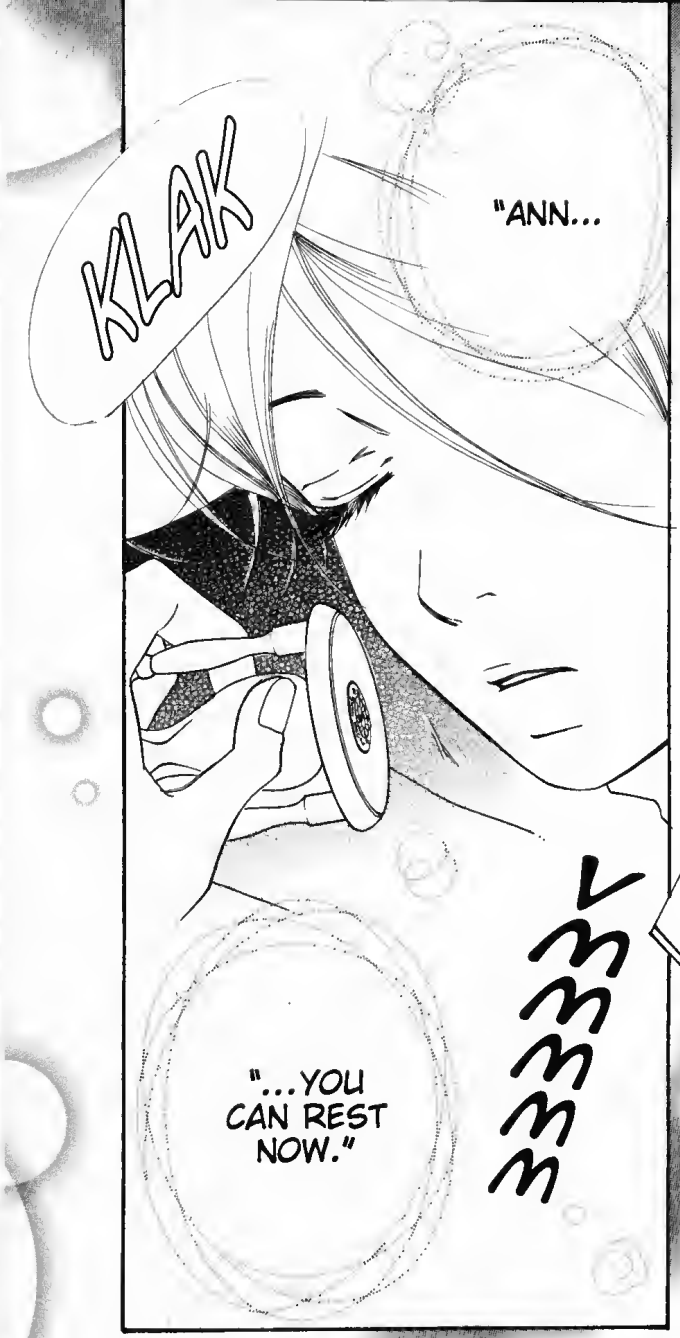
KURO II...
MEOW
KURO ...?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MEOW
LAST NIGHT'S RAINS CONTINUE ...
...WITH NO SIGN OF LETTING UP.
BIP
KA-CHIK
ZZZ
HE'S DONE IT AGAIN!
Fallen asleep with the TV on!!

AFTER EVERYTHING THAT JUST HAPPENED ...
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT HER ...
I CAN'T REACH HER ON HER CELL PHONE ...
...AND SHE DIDN'T SHOW UP AT WORK TODAY.
SHE'S NOT A CHILD ...
...I'M SURE SHE'S JUST OUT SOME-WHERE, BUT...
SHE HASN'T COME HOME.
NOBBLE
JOSTLE
KRASSH
HELLO? MRS. UEKUSA?

...
RING
"...THE ENGAGE-MENT IS OFF."
"I'M SORRY TO TELL YOU...
RING
RING
IS ANN THERE?
HELLO?
MRS. UEKUSA? IT'S KAEDE.
I'M SORRY TO CALL SO LATE.

I'VE...
...HAD AN UNEASY FEELING LATELY ...
TAK
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MIWAKO ...
MIWAKO IS...
...GOING TO TAKE ANN AWAY!

I HEAR MOM IN THE DISTANCE ...



Profile of Hinako Ashihara

This time the story is about Ann's life at 20 and 26. I thought this was a long way off, but now Ann is all of 26! Amazing!
—Hinako Ashihara

Hinako Ashihara won the 50th Shogakukan Manga Award for *Sunadokei*. She debuted with *Sono Hanashi Okotowari Shimasu* in *Bessatsu Shojo Comics* in 1994. Her other works include *SOS*, *Forbidden Dance*, and *Tennen Bitter Chocolate*.

Glossary

If only adolescence came with an instruction manual.
We can't give you that, but this glossary of terms
might prove useful for this volume.

Page 4: evanescent
Originally the word *utakata*, which has the connotation of something vanishing like smoke. It could also be translated as "transient, fragile, bubble, foam." Indeed, one of the kanji means "bubble," and Ann talks in this chapter about turning into bubbles and disappearing into water. "Evanescent" poetically captures these various nuances.

Page 11, panel 4: Coming-of-Age ceremony
Coming-of-Age Day is usually the second Monday in January. Youth turning twenty attend ceremonies and parties to celebrate becoming an adult.

Page 16, panel 5: *shochu*
Shochu is an alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice or potatoes that is similar to vodka.

Page 16, panel 5: *ponshu*
Nihonshu, or Japanese *sake*.

Page 30, panel 5: *furisode*
A kind of kimono for young adult, unmarried women characterized by long sleeves. Often worn by girls at their Coming-of-Age ceremony.

Page 41, panel 6: "Naka looks like his daughter."
In the original, the friend said Naka and her boyfriend looked like an *enko*-couple. *Enko* is short for *enjo-kosai*, which literally means "compensated-relationship dating." As with paid escorts in the U.S., the pairing usually consists of an older person paying for the companionship of a younger person.

Page 47, panel 6: closing ceremony
Originally *ote wo haishaku*, a request to begin clapping in unison to a predetermined rhythm. A ritual people perform at the end of a gathering.

Page 52, panel 8: *Izumo soba*
Soba are buckwheat noodles. Many regions around Japan have a special local method of preparation.

Page 97, panel 2: the witch
Originally *otsubone*, a term used to denote a woman with a long professional career. Historically, an *otsubone* was a lord's high-ranking first wife.

Page 112, panel 3: *yubamaki*
Yuba is tofu skin or dried beancurd. *Yubamaki* (literally "tofu skin roll") is *yuba* around some kind of filling.

Page 123, panel 3, "Should we register the marriage first?"
In Japan, people legalize their marriage by registering at a local government office. The wedding ceremony for family and friends is merely a celebration and often occurs long after registration.

Page 132, panel 1: "Even ogres weep."
The original is a shortened version of the saying *oni no me nimo namida*. The general sense of this expression is that even cold or unemotional people cry.

Page 132, panel 7: wedding money envelopes
The kanji on these envelopes, *kotobuki*, means "longevity" and "congratulations." People usually give money enclosed in these envelopes to a marrying couple.

Page 139, panel 6: company uniform
While it isn't as prevalent as it used to be, many companies in Japan still require female employees to wear uniforms. The male employee's "uniform" is often just a Western-style suit.

tion of the original artwork–
! Check out the diagram
to get the hang of
then turn to the
of the book to